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ART AND IRELAND.







ALTAR RELIEF, LOUGHREA CATHEDRAL.  
(By JOHN HUGHES, R.H.A.)

*Frontispiece.*

# ART AND IRELAND

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BY

ROBERT ELLIOTT.



PREFACE BY EDWARD MARTYN.

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## P R E F A C E.



IF there are doubts, and differences of opinion, and justifiable repudiations of those reproaches made by the enemies of Catholicity in Ireland, who say that the means of the people are squandered on the building of churches in a quantity altogether beyond its needs, there can, among those who are best qualified to know, be no doubt or difference of opinion, or repudiation whatever of the fact, that, as far as artistic excellence is concerned, the money laid out on those churches has, in the great majority of cases, been lamentably squandered. It is not pleasant to think of this ; and the feeling of dissatisfaction is scarcely lessened by the further fact that our so-called church art is not in a very much worse state than the modern church art of any other country. The reason for this complete decay of art in the churches, where once it found its chief inspiration and support, may be ascribed in the first place to the secular spirit of the Renaissance, which drew away the artist gradually, to seek his inspiration in worldly pomp, and the palaces of princes, so that now for many years church art became tainted with secularism, until at last the greatest masters almost ceased to occupy themselves with religious subjects at all. In the next place it may be ascribed to the trade architect and the decorative tradesman, both products of the modern spirit of vulgarity, which

gradually evolved itself with the development of machinery and commerce. It was then that the middle classes first discovered that machine-made imitations in sham materials of the splendours in the palaces could be produced at comparatively little cost, and that the tradesman could, for all purposes concerning the discrimination of the middle classes, take the place of old occupied in the world by the artist. Thus for the first time in the history of mankind, there was brought into existence the *cheap*. In the great ages all art was real art. The rich had sumptuous art, and the poor simple art ; but now the middle classes got to despise the simple art of the poor, and as they could not afford the sumptuous art of the rich, they had recourse to its *cheap* imitation. This is the real vulgarity—the vulgarity of pretension and sham—the vulgarity of the intellect, beside which the vulgarity of manners is comparatively inoffensive. It is an absurdity, too, like that of the middle classes in Russia, who cannot afford the furs of the nobles, and consider the sheep skins of the peasants not respectable, and consequently shiver in their cheap respectability. Thus after a while this cheapness or vulgarity or respectability, or whatever anyone may wish to call it, having been invented by the middle class, gradually got adopted by all classes, until the upper classes have probably now become the most essentially vulgar of any in the materialism and thinly veneered savagery of their tastes. Of course such a change in the world could not fail to be detrimental to art in general, but above all to ecclesiastical art, because the artist had



previously got estranged from it, as I have already shown.

The admirable book, *Art and Ireland*, to which I gladly write this Preface, has for its chief theme the saving of modern church design and ornament from the crude paw of the tradesman, and their restoration, as in the olden time, to the delicate hand of the artist. Its author, Mr. Robert Elliott, has been known for some years by his art criticisms in the Dublin press, which have, because of their sound views, borne fruit in a sporadic betterment of ecclesiastical ornamentation in Ireland. But the improvement has only appeared just enough to be perceptible. A very great deal has yet to be done. It only can be hoped that this work of an artist like Mr. Elliott, who has a real knowledge of his subject, will be widely read and considered by every patron of art in Ireland, more especially by ecclesiastics, because with them is the chief patronage. The spirit in which it is written is sympathetic and constructive, and not, like so much current criticism, merely capricious, denunciatory, and barren. Mr. Elliott, like all artists and persons of taste, is shocked, not at the amount, but at the inferiority of our modern churches. That they are very bad no person of taste can doubt; but, I repeat, I do not think them really inferior to the modern churches of any other country. It is only because Ireland, having had her old churches destroyed in greater numbers, was forced to build a greater number of new churches; and so the proportion of tradesmen's art over-

whelms us more here with its vaster hideousness. We are not really worse except in a greater profusion of badness, and we have probably as much real art as there is in the modern churches of any land. If England boasts of Westminster Cathedral we can boast of Killarney Cathedral and of Maynooth College Chapel, which are in their style quite as fine. It is true, Maynooth is ruined by its furniture, decoration, and stained glass ; but Westminster Cathedral in time will be ruined also, if the quality of decoration that I saw begun there, is not much improved. On the other hand, I doubt whether, in any of the English Catholic or modern Protestant Churches, there could be found so many real works of art as are in Loughrea Cathedral, and I am sure that among the smaller modern churches of England, there is nothing, for charming originality and artistic feeling, to compare with the parish church of Spiddal.

Now the question is, how are we to find a practical remedy for the miserable decadence of church art ? What work is already done cannot unhappily be remedied, and, of course, what will be done in the future must be little in comparison to what has already been done. But it is important that this little should be done well. How may that be ? Mr. Elliott suggests that the clergy should cease to employ the commercial manufacturer of bad art, and employ the artist instead. That is, of course, excellent advice. The common sense of it is obvious. In serious illnesses we employ physicians or surgeons, to prescribe for us, not apothecaries, as in serious

law suits, barristers to plead for us, not attornies. Why, therefore, should we in such important matters as ecclesiastical design and ornament employ the commercial manufacturer of bad art, instead of the artist ? The reasonableness and simplicity of this argument would seem beyond all cavil. I have often myself used it to the clergy, but I do not believe they ever really understood me. The reason is that æsthetics are not looked upon by them, or the generality of mankind, as a serious study, like medicine or law, but rather as a species of fantastic frivolity, about which nearly all persons are or consider themselves or anyone else qualified to pronounce judgment. Consequently, when they find themselves liking the tradesman's artistic rubbish, as is natural with those who understand nothing of art, which is really the most difficult of sciences, with pitfalls even for experts, they are, on the other hand, in the case of the true artist, repelled by those very excellences which give a work distinction in the eyes of a judge. Therefore it is only folly for patrons to persevere in their present course or to try to exalt the tradesman above the artist. It is useless to say that, because they admire the great art of the Church in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, they ought to know what good modern work is. They are only deceiving themselves when they think they admire this great art. They cannot admire it, and admire the modern tradesman's church art at the same time. What understanding can there be of the stained glass at Chartres, for instance, when the modern puppet-like drawings of foreign or native

tradesmen are chosen to obscure with their crude dirty colour our church windows ? I do not think, therefore, there is any hope of betterment to be expected by merely suggesting to have the artist substituted for the tradesman. I repeat I do not believe that the idea, simple and full of common sense though it is, can be made generally comprehensible so as to lead to its adoption. Something more striking and drastic will have to be done, if there is to be any real improvement. My proposition is this : I would reverently urge upon the ecclesiastical authorities, if they have any respect for enlightened public opinion, to establish a committee of recognised artists, who, no one can have the hardihood to deny, should be the best judges in such matters, and to let no church building or decoration be carried out that will not be approved of by this committee. If only such a body could have been formed, when the era of our modern church building began, how different, how interesting, it would be to possess so much artistic work all through the country to-day. At the worst we would have been saved the mortification of seeing ecclesiastical art, which was once so great, and the admiration of the highest artists, now debased by the trade architect, the trade sculptor, the trade decorator, and the stained glass tradesman to be an object of pity and horror to persons of artistic taste.

EDWARD MARTYN.

## INTRODUCTION.

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“WHAT is the good of talking art to Ireland now ? ” asked a writer in a weekly journal—*The Leader*—three years ago. He doubtlessly voiced the opinion of a very large section of Irishmen ; a questionable opinion it was—and the article in which it appeared elaborated that opinion—and it meant that it was no use “talking art ” to Ireland at all. She was to become commercially prosperous first. That article by a well-known writer, who assumes the *nom de guerre* of “Pat ” I noticed at the time. I have not included my reply, or rather my criticism of his standpoint, in the selected essays published in the following book ; but as this book has for one object the setting before Irishmen some of the reasons why it is still necessary to talk art to Ireland, and to condemn a very great deal of what has already been talked to her, I shall here summarise some of that article in this short introduction to the selected and revised essays incorporated in the book.

Without art we cannot be said to live, except as machines live. Many men remain machines all their lives. If a country were to become a vast aggregation of human and other machines, though the millenium of the ultra utilitarians would have arrived, something else would have arrived to qualify that state of machine-made bliss,—utter disgust at life and a loathing of it.

Men live not by bread alone (as it is now tritely said) but they live truly by religion of some kind, by faith of some kind in something outside of themselves, the attributes of which "something" must be made palpable to the senses by art of some kind. Such has been the true life of the world. Your Donatello or your Mac Bratdan O'Echans are more necessary to that life than your Incorporated Society of Bakers. It is true that when a country decays its arts decay, when it flourishes its art flourishes ; or perhaps it would be more exact to say that when a country decays its artists leave it for another that is not decaying, and when it marches toward importance, art accompanies, refines, and purifies that procession.

Everything of value that is done well is done with a knowledge of that art which alone can make it beautiful. Preaching, singing, tailoring, soap-making, saint-making, and especially writing when directed against the arts themselves. The production of certain very useful things for the bodily health and comfort of the Irish people, for the satisfaction of its pleasures and for the assuaging of its pains, is increasing daily. But in the producing of anything necessary to the life of the body, the production pure and simple becomes insignificant beside the artistic concomitants ; and the many productions that are not classible in the category of art, are yet through some friendly art made stimulative of the spiritual life without which man is lower than the beasts of the field.

So much as a summary of what I said three years ago. But despite the continued existence of an Academy of Art, of Art Schools, and Art Masters and Art Inspectors, the influence of the art of the *artist* in the land—and especially in the Church—is almost as languid as it was then. Commercialism trading under the usurped title of “Art” seems to be as vigorous as ever. To condemn what has been “talked to Ireland” in the name of this spurious art is of small importance compared to the condemning of what has been *done*; for the talking or writing of a pander to the enterprising exploiter of skilled labour advertising his wares as regally as any other usurper his services to the commerce of men,—such, after all, may not have a fraction of the influence that the advertisement of the doer himself has with possible patrons.

These possible patrons to-day, actual ones to-morrow, still do not seemingly appreciate that God has not created two worlds alike, nor two countries alike, nor two souls alike, nor two flowers alike. A similarity of form and purpose in certain groups of things may be at the foundation of our ideas of order and harmony; but harmony is not monotony, and the human duplicating machine that has so largely superseded the old creative hand that studied God’s creation so well and wisely, is patronised by the Church, and in the haunts of villadom; and thus is enabled to go on monotonously adding like to like with callous and mathematical regularity. That dupli-

cating machine is, in many an art, the hand that from its youth up is cramped in the vice of an exploitive tradesman's will; and evidence of this lamentable tabefaction of the art impulse in the individual is to be found in almost every church in Ireland that the writer has seen himself, or heard of from reliable witnesses.

The doer himself, when not an artist, is a ready advertiser; his very commercial success is his best advertisement in the arena where he competes with the weapons that mortify his antagonist. To have committed a hundred wrongs in the name of art is accepted as a recommendation by some among the audience that he should be commissioned to perpetrate a few more. And so to celebrate this unnatural pullulation a successive brewing of commercial art tea goes on without replacing the pallid leaves in the commercial pot. If the name of the original brand of tea please his patron, the latter does not seem to object to the twentieth watering of the leaves.

But it may be urged, that if an original thing of beauty be duplicated,—if for instance a relief by Mino da Fiesole be faithfully reproduced by some process in which nothing of form or any quality (except that which age alone can give) is lost—surely that duplication is beautiful? Or a bronze cast may be duplicated a score of times with ordinary care on the part of a skilful artificer; a plaster mould can be taken from the most delicate relief in marble or bronze; and so nothing of the



original may be lost in the process ; and like a passage of music played on several occasions, if the executant interprets (or reproduces) the original work faithfully, no beauty is lost. And it may have other advantages, this duplication ; it distributes about the world things of beauty that had never been seen by thousands were they not duplicated ; never seen by the poorer in the community were such duplicators not patronised. It is true ; and museums are perhaps the best places for such exact reproductions. But what is doing the gravest harm to art in Ireland, and especially in the Church, are not the comparatively few exact reproductions of fine works of art by dead masters of painting and sculpture, but the duplication of some very unfaithful copy of either a dead master or a living workman ; or else a duplication of some modern original work, the vapidness of which has caused no offence to a character disliking patronage. Ruskin said many fine things, and one of the best and most rational things he did say, was that :—"Without mingling of heart passion with hand power, no art is possible. The highest art unites both in their intensest degrees : the action of the hand at its finest with that of the heart at its fullest." There can be no heart-passion in the continual watering of the blanched tea leaves in the commercial art tea-pot.

I do not think that the people of Ireland, and the Clergy in particular, appreciate this distinction between the passionate force that moves the artist

and the mere self-supporting force or self advertising force, that moves the average tradesman. And I am quite confident that they cannot conceive the harm they may be doing, not alone to the taste of an apt generation of Irishmen, but to a possible posterity—should emigration cease from the land.

In one part of Ireland alone is there any indication of a radical change toward a better state of art patronage. During the last two or three years, in the West, in the dioceses of Clonfert and of Galway, work of an exceptional nature in Ireland has been in progress. Artists in Architecture; in Sculpture; in Wood-carving; in Painting; and a clever artificer in iron,—working under the supervision of the architect,—have been generously patronised by the Most Rev Dr O'Dea, Bishop of Clonfert, at Loughrea; and the result so far is very satisfactory. A relief on the high altar \* by

\* Of this beautiful relief, probably the finest yet executed for any Irish church, this Christ appealing to heaven and earth from the shadow of the tomb,—in gazing at which I feel that fleeting material incident is but the shadow of nothing, and immortal religious emotion the foundation of everything worth having—I can find only unqualified praise to write. It is, in the most forceful language that I can command—The work of an *artist*. It infects one with a feeling of a great and sorrowful joy.

I must point out to the reader, in justice to Mr. Hughes, that the photograph from which the block was made, was taken from the clay model in his studio, not from the bronze in Loughrea Cathedral. As, however, the photograph itself was a very good one and taken in a suitable light I thought it preferable to get a block made from it, rather than to reproduce the bronze—though in the latter, as the artist himself says in a letter to the writer—"the modelling of the central Figure is much broader and simpler than in this photograph."

Mr John Hughes, R.H.A., is reproduced in this book by permission of Dr O'Dea ; as well as a window by Miss Sarah Purser, H.R.H.A.,—one of several executed at her works in Dublin for churches in Co Galway and elsewhere,—and a baptismal font by Mr Michael Shortall, who did some excellent carving of corbels in the cathedral when Archbishop Healy was Bishop and Father O'Donovan was Administrator there. In the diocese of Galway, the parish church of Spiddal is now well advanced toward external completion, and a drawing of it by Mr William Scott, its architect (and the designer of much of the interior work at Loughrea Cathedral, now in hand) is also reproduced by permission of the Rev. M. D. Conroy, P.P. of Spiddal. Thanks to the initiative of the Most Reverend Dr. MacCormack, the Bishop of Galway, of Father Conroy, P.P., of Lord Killanin, and of Mr. Edward Martyn, there is little fear that this church (a protest as it is against showy commercialism) will be spoiled internally later on, by the introduction of incongruous features.

It would be unjust to other patronage to say there is literally *no* attempt elsewhere to employ artists of undoubted talent, and of Irish birth or habitation, (at Enniskillen, for exception, in architecture and in stained glass) but there is little evidence except in the West, of a *radical* change in the attitude of what is mostly a misguided clerical patronage. This work in the Co. Galway, of men and women, who—the writer knows

not only by this later evidence—feel, think, and enjoy (which latter is of much moment) like true artists, gives one hope of the Clerical art patronage in the country gradually improving; even as the secular taste is improving in rare and unexpected places. But the commercial instinct will probably lead a powerful body of doers—powerful in their energetic playing down to a mediocre taste—to abuse this work in the West as lacking in something which experience has taught them generally succeeds in evoking appreciation in this country. That quality—if a negation of all character and interesting subtlety can be called a quality—of the commercial work, this country uncomfortably bristles with; and assuredly the Loughrea and Spiddal works referred to, and a few others, lack such a quality. But the prestige of the commercialist is a force in the land, and his opinion is quite a *verbum sapienti* in many clerical circles.

In the following essays, selected in major part from the *Irish Rosary* and *The Leader* (though all have been amended and some lengthened and some shortened) there is incorporated several years of observation and travel and many more of art study. I have practised in order to preach. And if my “preaching” irritate any section of Irishmen, my defence shall be that I desire to serve them whom I love to the best of my ability. And this book has been written in the interests of these,—of Catholic and Ireland loving Irishmen wherever they may be found caring just one iota for art.

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# ART AND IRELAND.



## ART IN THE CHURCH : DISCURSIVE.

IF the people, and especially the poor, are to enjoy life and lead happy lives in the land they instinctively love (though they are leaving it every day), then all the resources of art must be drawn into their service. They must be gladdened with the colour of life ; they must be encouraged to feel that life is, in itself, something beautiful, and that divine things have all their counterparts here in this beautiful life. The people, especially those in large cities, must be taught again (for perhaps they knew it once) that the knowledge of beauty is the knowledge that will save them from themselves. I am going to leave religion and ethics alone, as they are outside of my province, but indirectly I wish to draw upon one of the maxims of philosophy, and to affirm that to “know oneself,” is the rarest form of wisdom to which the enjoyment of art can ultimately lead. But if it never lead to that, in certain cases, it will enable one to cast off that self at will, and to allow the liberated soul to live in an imaginative world that is one of beauty alone. In this it is adjunctive to religion and philosophy. I have no quarrel with those who put philosophy

before art, but I feel that it is the best philosophy which wields the mighty yet subtle forces of art, and that can use them to combat the deadly dull perils that beset a country, which may lose its appreciation of, or desire for, beautiful things.

So my point of view is that of the artist, that of one to whom a really beautiful country will mean a joyful one ; and of one to whom a naturally beautiful land has no existence as a beautiful country, no existence as a beautiful whole, that is, without the stimulus of art among its people. Indeed, I think you will find that this joy comes from outside of the artist, in the creation of the work of art that he loves, and leads us to something outside of ourselves, because of that inherent joy. Any great work of art that remains to us, and that appeals to the gladdening emotions, must have given joy to its creator ; and so it can, as it were, impregnate us with a similar joy ; and this power is the sign of its greatness as a work of art.

There is another point of view which I should like to refer to, and which is not my own, and that is the archæological or antiquarian point of view, a very common one in this country. If I have no quarrel with those who put philosophy before art, I have certainly a quarrel with those who look at art through the microscope of archæology. I have never met a man who had the archæological and tabulative faculties developed, that was either a good judge of a work of art, or whose emotions could be aroused by the art, as differentiated from



the antiquity and associations, of the work he professedly admired. To the artist, and to the ordinary man who has not the archæological spirit, it is the art, irrespective of its age or associations, that evokes his pleasure ; to the antiquarian it is its historical significance, or its literary value, that keeps his interest alive. To the antiquarian and archæological spirit we are indebted for the preservation of many works of art, and therefore it has its uses ; but there are times when this spirit conflicts with the spirit of art itself ; and there has been many an artist who has had to suffer because of a domination on the part of an archæological patron, who could sing the praises of the *Book of Kells*, or of the Chapel of Cormac, but whose capacity for receiving joy direct from the art itself has been atrophied through want of its exercise.

I refer to this point of view, because it is that of many a lecturer who has spoken in the name of art in this country. Sometimes he is a parish priest ; sometimes he is a benevolent celebrity of local fame who is a member of some Institution or other, and he usually relies on the aid of the magic lantern to make his points. The only result of such lectures as these, is to spread a feeling of stupefying pride among the audience. They feel that, after all, though the poor Egyptians may have had Karnac and Luxor, and the Greeks the Athenian Acropolis, Ireland has had in New Grange, and the beehive cell, and, let us not forget that ever useful example, the Chapel of Cormac at Cashel, something surpassing.

Nay, I have spoken to an intelligent man who assured me (after one of these lectures) that the buildings on the Rock of Cashel were finer by far than anything on the Acropolis at Athens : probably the opinion of the lecturer himself, who was some curious mixture of archæology and national pride. What an Irishman should be conscious of is the fact that his early architecture is so distinctive, and so well suited to the needs of the people who lived in the land ; not that it can bear favourable comparison with the great Greek temple of the Parthenon, or that of Jupiter Olympus or of any other ; for no comparison is possible.

First I want you to imagine the conditions under which these works of art that yet remain to us in Ireland, and elsewhere, were created. Imagination is always so much finer than sensuous reality ; but, in all retrospective flights, imagination itself is the only reality possible. The past can only exist in imagination, yet its reality consists in that the mind that conjures up its pictures is a living one, and has its instantaneous comparisons of the present always blended with the past. So I want to draw your minds backward a little, that they may dwell for a few minutes on the conditions under which the churches of Mediæval Christendom were builded and adorned. We have heard so much of the glories of Irish kings, and other interesting chieftains and warriors, that sometimes one's imagination becomes completely filled with one vast procession of tramping battle

hosts ; and this procession of Kern and Gallowglass, Ardrighs and invading Vikings, and later Normans, stands somehow for Ireland ; just as at present the two contending armies in the Far East are representative of Russia and Japan in the same imagination fed by the daily papers.

But it must be remembered that battles are but the spasms of a nation's life, and that the true life of a people is to be found where the farmer has sown and reaped, the weaver woven, the smith has forged, and the builder has built. Their occupations and arts have never ceased, even in times of warfare ; and even warfare itself has stimulated many arts and industries. The soldier's occupation has been sometimes disastrous to civilization, sometimes protective, but wherever a nation has fought, and fought well, art has never suffered by reason of such fighting—if such a nation ever had an art. As the Irish annalists say of Brian Boru, he was buried in a “new tomb” ; and we can imagine it was a tomb that would put the whole of Glasnevin to shame.

The pages of Irish History I shall not turn over ; but I want you to imagine that the conditions under which the early churches of Ireland were built and furnished, were the same conditions under which all the churches of Europe were built. Although the great *dispensing* patron, or acting patron, as it were, was the church herself, yet the money always came from those Kings, nobles, chiefs, and princes, who were always slaughtering each

other, or getting their subjects to do it for them. And if a Prelate of the Church were granted lands and revenues, he always used part of those revenues for the glorification of the Church ; and sometimes undoubtedly to perpetuate the memory of himself, or of the prince who favoured him. But the men of the people, Monks ; Dominican Friars, saints, some of them ; lay artificers, blackguards, no doubt, many of them ; the architects the sculptors, the painters were the really great men that did the work which has so often made the fame of Prelate and prince ; or at least has been the means of its perpetuation, in the centuries that have preserved it. The historian may rely on dry-as-dust annals for his dates, but it is to works of art, whether in Greece, in Egypt, Rome or in Ireland that he is indebted for the colouring of his facts, so that they may live on the page of his book.

Anybody can give money to build a church, especially when he is just as sure of his dinner after doing so, as he was before ; but it must be the artist who is to create (under the Almighty) the church itself ; not with money, though he may need it to live his life, but with his sense of beauty, and with the skill of his hands. In mediæval Ireland, we can imagine how the artist must have lived his life, and found the joy of beauty in the living of it ; for the artist is the same in every age and in every country ; but here is one point where the present will raise a comparison to blend with this image of the past—there was only one Church and that was *his*

Church. He was not inflicted with the criticism of people who were alien to his religion ; people who had absolutely no bond of sympathy with his religion did not write books about his work. He was a man of artistic faith as well as of religious faith, and he recorded his faith objectively in stone and wood and in metal. The man believed in his craft as well as in his Church, and out of belief strength always grows, vigour and life in art as in everything else. Writers who have admired the art, have sometimes adopted the point of view that the work of the early Italian artists was a protest against the spirit of the Church—the protest of paganism. Never was there a greater fallacy than this accounting for the art.\*

Another thing which did not trouble this artist of the bygone times, was disbelief in the human figure as being especially and incomparably adapted for the purpose of decorative work; and, as he believed, he acted up to his belief; and no patron said him

\* It is true that in the Church, what may be termed "paganism" in art, (as exemplified afterwards by painters like Rubens, and in sculpture by the weak successors of Michael Angelo) was the exhibition of a spirit antagonistic to that Christian Spirituality that is the distinctive attribute of the fourteenth and fifteenth century painting and sculpture. A Saint Sebastian (*e.g.*,) can be painted "paganly"—meaning that the painting can only stir one to admiration for the beautiful lines, and colour, etc., of the figure—and no more; and judged as art, this is enough. But with the Early Italians unquestionable belief in the mystical truths of the Christian Creed stimulated the work, and formed the basis of their *conceptions*. But even Rubens's "paganism" was but a veneer over a Christian foundation. The long list of Dominican artists of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, is itself an illustration of the essentially Christian impulse of the art within the church.

may when he preferred little children without their garments, or the wisp of modern muslin, a conventional and latter day puritanism.\*. Again, just imagine a condition of things, when an artist in those far off days, was unharassed by a patronage, that is always insisting that some foreign business firm for the supply of ready-made statues, or pictures, could give him a few points in quantity for money expended !

No, the artist in the mediæval church was commissioned to make a crucifix, or a shrine, or a crosier, the best that he could ; and he mostly did his best, judging by what has been permitted to remain to us. Wars and rumours of wars there undoubtedly were, and countries were the better for them sometimes ; Like Pope Julius II., the artist himself took up the sword at times ; but one thing never troubled him, and that was the universal emporium for the supply of cheap church art. Plate glass shop windows had not yet been invented, and the exploiter had not become a necessity of his age.

I could, if I wished, and you were more patient than I conceive, give you many instances of fidelity

\* Sometimes in the black and white reproductions of pictures by old masters, I have seen the most unpardonable liberty taken by those who have reproduced them. An Infant Christ, or St. John, will have a scroll, apparently of white card-board or tin, across the middle of the figure ; a glaring line of prudery that destroys the whole balance of the picture sometimes. Draped figures, male and female, where the form beneath is *well indicated*, are, on the whole, to be preferred to the nude ; but little children are always more interesting absolutely nude ; they have not height enough for drapery to hang upon them in dignified folds.

to his own soul, to his art and to his church, on the part of the bygone artist ; and of wise and thoughtful patronage on the part of mediæval clerics and others who often were themselves architects of no mean ability. It must have been the same in Ireland as in the rest of Christian Europe ; these men, clerics, and artists, were not combined duplicative machines in the grasp of some exploiter whose only object is to make a fortune and retire from trade. They were artists who attempted to create something which had never existed before, always something fresh and original, nearly always something beautiful. For imperfect as some olden work undoubtedly was, there was one thing it never was ; it was never without that peculiar attribute or quality, which we call charm. Things almost ugly in detail have often a comprehensive charm that can be felt more than explained ; and let us feel quite sure this charm can only arise out of the self-expression and freedom of the artist.

There is another thing which this olden artist was free from, and that was the dominion of the architect, the modern type of architect, as we know it so well. This gentleman had not yet been evolved. A Bishop, or an Abbot, ordered a picture, or a tomb, or a stained glass window ; or some Prince or noble required a family chapel attached to the church ; but the sculptor (who was indeed sometimes an architect himself) or the painter, had simply to please his patrons, after himself, he had never to submit to the dictation of some fellow with a T square, and

compasses, and a commercial instinct, and with somebody else's book of stock designs, and the word "style" for ever on his lips. The artist of those days knew the meaning of style, none better, he was himself creating it; but it had a personal meaning far different to what it has to-day on the lip of the architectural humbug. With him a "style" means something quite impersonal and irreformable; you may select such and such a style at such and such a price, and he will see that the contractor keeps to it faithfully. Why, our church building patrons might just as well dispense with the architect altogether, if he has no personal style himself. Anyway, the artist, some hundreds of years ago, was a singularly happy man in this respect, and we may well envy him his freedom in the days before what has been called the "Reformation." A reformation, by the way, which generated such a deformation of ideals in ecclesiastical art that it will take us many years yet to shake off the incubus that, like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, sits heavy upon us adventurous ones. I allude here chiefly to one form of this incubus, an archæological and so-called historical accuracy which has crept into Catholic art everywhere, not alone in Ireland; in fact only here by imitation.\*

\* Another form of this incubus is the puritanical spirit about the figure referred to above. "Reformers" called the Church "pagan," because (among many other things) it encouraged such things as Michael Angelo's *Christo in the Minerva*, at Rome. And one will always find clerics who are affected by these old anti-Catholic calumnies, and who look now on the living human figure in art as the first step to damnation.



The artist in those days was free from such an incubus ; his personality was everything to himself, and the impossible personality and surroundings of people in the past that he could but imagine, and that dimly enough, was no rule of art for him. His own individuality, and his own country, was everything in a Madonna, or in a Saint, whether in Italy or in Flanders.

Well, in Ireland, but little now remains of the work of the artist, but that little shews that he had a soul of his own. In architecture, even in its mouldering remains, we can see how, from the House of Columba at Kells (dated by the antiquary, I believe, at the year 807) to the Chapel of Cormac M'Carthy at Cashel (dated at 1127), this work was the expression of the individuality of not only the nation, but of the man himself, that built each church. All these buildings (see any list) and many later ones, were not exactly Parthenons, nor Florentine Duomos, nor York Minsters ; but they were, at least, as sincere in the expression of a personal art and national needs as the temples of ancient Greece, or the Cathedrals of France or of England. And if the later Cathedrals of Ireland were to a great extent analogous to the English types of their periods, yet were they in turn embodiments of a racial way of dealing with ecclesiastical requirements.

In metal work, as we know so well, this sense of decorative design was as great as that of any artist in any period, and greater than that of any

contemporary British artist. If his rendering of the human figure was often grotesque and sometimes infantine in itself—as it was elsewhere in mediæval times—let us remember that there are certain imperfections which can never suggest to our minds thoughts of disgust. When looking at some very imperfect work (in some of its details) we may feel, in spite of these imperfections, the power of artistic sincerity; and when that sincerity has a rightful objective we feel an undoubted joy, if not always the most refined of pleasures. But when looking at the fine metal work of Christian Ireland—before the figure was introduced—we can feel both this pleasure and this joy; for here we are face to face with the sincere man himself, who is technically clever, and a great designer to boot.

Well, these early and later artists were free from many of the banes that have to be endured by the modern artist, and the result of this freedom was beauty, whether in Ireland or on the Continent. And, before I begin to criticise in general the churches that we have here, and in which we are bound by our obligation to worship, I want to conjure up yet in your imaginations the churches that were erected and ornamented from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries; churches that were created by artists and not by any prototypes of the modern tradesman. Christian art can never again in all human probability create anything finer, anything more beautiful, than that which was produced in those centuries. There is no better word than that of

beautiful with which to describe them, or I should certainly have used it. Those who know France and Italy, and England, will understand that, and those who do not, can, perhaps, imagine churches which bear as great a contrast to most of our modern ones in Ireland as, if you will allow me the analogy, the incomparable nobility and majesty of a patriot king, like King Brian himself haranguing his army with cross-hilted sword, and, say, the pose of a modern prince, stammering through his secretariially prepared speech to a regiment embarking for some foreign battle ground. The object in both speeches may be to stimulate what is termed patriotism ; but whereas you have in the one, the fire and resolution and exaltation of a man standing on his own ground, prepared to fight and die himself in the cause of right, and that which is all in all to him ; in the other you have the worn and conventional phrases of a man who is longing to get rid of it all, and to go home and have a quiet cigar and a French novel, or perhaps a game of baccarat.

In these churches of pre-reformation times the artist created something in which his interest was so vivid, so personal, so clear to himself, that beautiful things were the natural result of such free conditions. These churches were full of an intensity of meaning, and personal feeling. The men who adorned them really meant what they said in their work—they said what they thought and they thought much before they set about saying it ; whether in architecture,

in sculpture, or in painting. Just think ; hardly anywhere in the work of these centuries do we find work really unbeautiful ; it was one great cycle of progressive art ; they went from beauty to beauty, from joy to joy, Ruskin says very well, in referring to the sculpture of one of these churches, with all his power as a master of melodious prose, says in the very same chapter in which he, so Ruskin-like, refers to the modern Catholics as “ idolatrous Romanists,” in a very fine passage about this wonderful sculpture:—“ We know not for what they laboured and we see no evidence of their reward. Victory, wealth, authority, happiness, all have departed, though bought by many a bitter sacrifice. But of them, and their life and their toil upon the earth, one reward, one evidence, is left to us in those gray heaps of deep-wrought stone. They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors ; but they have left us their adoration.”

Now, I think you will be able to imagine what has been done by artists in the church without my pointing to any well-known examples, and I wish to contrast what is being done to-day, and in greater detail. You will note that, from what I have already said, I have nothing but affection for what is termed Gothic art, for such art was prevailing generally in Europe during the centuries that I have referred to. But in coming to our modern Irish churches I have to say some hard things of so-called “ Gothic ” art, which may be “ Gothic ” if it

likes, but it certainly is not art. It is not the craft of the artist ; and if I were to give it a generic term, I should call it the output of the tradesman. The tradesman of to-day is standing in the shoes of the artist who has been ousted from the church. But, as I intend to say something further on about tradesmen in Ireland, I shall not delay here to ring the changes upon him, or upon his foreign, and often inferior, but sometimes superior, competitor.

In coming to our modern churches (the outside of them first) the first thing that may strike a critic, if he can prevail on himself to look at some of them intently, is a spire, then a gable, then a large round or an oblong window, and then three doors. Then, when he has examined the church a little more intently, and taken in the crockets and the iron ridge ornaments, he begins to ask himself what does it all mean ; what does the *art* in them (if there be any art) what does it really mean ? They all seem so much alike, they all seem to have one general form of expression, but what is it that these builders have been trying to express ? When he discovers that not one, but very many architects have erected these buildings, he arrives at the conclusion that each and all of these men have been architecturally speaking with each other's, or with somebody else's system of expression. Few of them seem to have had any individual, personal, or original thoughts about architecture at all. Of course, a six-roomed terrace suburban villa cannot

be built without some thought, especially on the part of the bricklayer or carpenter, who, honest men, seem to be by comparison the most worthy of all that have been responsible for its building ; but I am referring here to the thought that precedes design. And if some of these churches are weak concessions to the want of thought of a patron—trained artistic thought, I mean—then the architect cannot escape the obvious charge of pandering to what he may condemn in his heart. To *design* anything with art presupposes a state of mind that can only find rest when it has expressed itself to its satisfaction. This is true of all the arts, from architecture to millinery. A commission to design a church or to paint a picture may be the immediate means of exciting the faculty of design on a given occasion ; but the state of mind must be an habitual state that is constantly seeking rest, and only finding it through thoughtful and emotional expression, and studied and conscious craft.

Well, what strikes us when we look at many of our so-called “ Gothic ” churches in Catholic Ireland ? I will tell you what it is that strikes me, and that is that their architects (save the mark !) have never been troubled with emotions that need any expression at all. In the finest of literary work we often hap on plagiarisms—some of them perhaps unconscious ones—but we should never class anything written by man as literary art if it consisted absolutely of nothing but undeniable plagiarisms more or less skilfully welded together.

We should call it by a very harsh name indeed, if it were indeed possible for a writer to perpetrate such a compilation. Yet, in these churches which we have seen taking shape in various parts of the country, there is to be found such a compilation of weak architectural plagiarisms that, to call it art at all, is to strain the meaning of the word to an ignoble degree. Of course, a burglar, or a pickpocket, may ply his business in what may be termed (in a strained sense) an artistic manner, but are we only to class many of these architectural plagiarists of ours as artists by such a forced analogy? Indeed they are not artists in any sense of the term; they are just architectonic plagiarists plying their duplicative business for a more or less honest living. I said more or less, for we must always distinguish between the development of pre-existing types, which is in these days as pardonable as it ever was, and the wholesale thoughtless purloining of architectural detail. It is hardly anything to the point that a patron here, or a patron there, may have made such plagiarisation possible, having perhaps, "Gothic" taste, or "Romanesque" taste, or "Classic" taste, or whatever he may term it. It is no defence to plead temptation; that is only a plea to mitigate the sentence when the facts have all been sifted out.

From whom then have our architects of these "Gothic" churches plagiarised? Not directly, or very seldom, from the great masters of mediæval architecture; that, if the theft were dexterously

done, might half condone the act ; but they have stolen from the imitative " Gothic " churches that have arisen in nearly every large English city and town, Scotch and Welsh town, during the preceding fifty years. In fact, these architectural purloiners have plagiarised other more, or less, worthy plagiarists in Great Britain, as I have pointed out in an article in the *Irish Rosary*.

As I have, in an article elsewhere, referred to spires in an unappreciative tone, I have to add that a spire may be a very beautiful campanile for a church, of course, if designed by an architect who is an artist. I have myself a certain weakness for spires and steeples, and pinnacles, even for crocketed ones, but they must express the individuality of the men who designed them. " A steeple does not *lie*, as somebody maliciously has said it does, it tells a fundamental truth, and by intention, a beautiful and indestructible one."\* I meant there, by *devotional* intention, that is the intention of those patrons who desired the spire, pointing heavenward, for a religious reason. But have these architects of ours, in their eclectic purloinings of the details of ready-made—designed modern English spires, (if they also be granted the devotional or religious reason), have they any individual or artistic intentions whatever ? Their intentions seem to me to have been only to get the steeples off their hands (not their minds, for they were not evolved from the mind at all), but

\* *Irish Rosary*, February, 1904.



off their hands as quickly as possible, with the least possible wear and tear to their brain-pans.

Before we pass on to the interiors of these modern churches, I should like to point out that culpable as the architects have been in their soulless pandering to the commonplace and self-satisfying predilections of their patrons, these patrons themselves have been much to blame (not for their predilections, may be, because these were probably the result of the general state of culture that British rule in the main has been responsible for in this country), but certainly to blame for their feverish desire to have the churches finished in every detail from the topmost crocket on the spire to the heap of contractor's rubbish, called a "Calvary," which is often put together in the garnishing of the precincts.

The architects, hundreds of years ago, were often great sculptors themselves, and sometimes painters; they were always great designers, and they thought out designs for churches in terms of monumental masses; but nowadays architecture and sculpture are two distinct professions of men distinct in aims and purposes. This has to be recognised if it has to be deplored; but the patron who, to-day, employs an architect to design a church complete in every ornamental particular from cast, or wrought, iron ridge atrocities to picture frames for Stations of the Cross, shows a very extraordinary belief in the capabilities of the modern jobbing architect. Let the patron

insist that the architect leave all the applied ornament alone unless the architect is known to be an artist himself ; for, as a very general rule, the architect has none of the intense sculptural feeling which moved the men of a bygone age. Some of these architects may have what Ruskin termed "Workmanly Admiration," that is "the delight of seeing good and neat masonry, together with that belonging to incipient developments of taste ; as for instance, a perception of proportion in lines, masses and mouldings." I say may have, because it is not always evident that these men, many of them at least, have a fine perception, or any passable perception of proportion in "lines, masses and mouldings." But a very elementary thing that their patrons, whether bishops, priests, or laymen, should have known, is that these architects were neither sculptors nor artists of any kind ; and that the so-called sculptors, whom they introduced to carry out their altars, and shrines, and ornamental detail generally, were just tradesmen themselves, and not artists. And that, whatever be granted, the architect's perception of "lines, masses and mouldings," his perception of sculptural beauty was altogether absent ; or else completely atrophied by too much study of the "lines, masses and mouldings" of other architects, from whom he cribbed them.

For, mind you, the ornamental features, both on the exterior, and often in the interior, of most of these churches I am alluding to, have been

usually “designed,” and always done, under the immediate supervision and control of the architect by the tradesman, mis-called a sculptor. Neither these architects, nor these tradesmen, are able to design decorative reliefs, or saints in their niches; and if we rarely find even a crocket, or a corbel, of tolerable appearance in itself among the many thousands in the land, we may be sure that it is the bold work of some sculptor, whom a more enlightened patron has tentatively employed.

And thus it is that the patron should have his share of the blame, for allowing these jobbing architects, and the tradesmen, whom these latter have introduced, to impose upon them; and for being in such a fever to come at completion in every detail, instead of thinking much, and taking the advice of men of acknowledged good taste in art.

In coming to the interiors, I wish to preface my remarks upon them, with a few preliminary ones upon the tradesman; a word I have already used several times this evening. For in the interiors what is called trade—stock in trade—art is visible everywhere. I have suggested elsewhere that the all-powerful patron can, if he wish to, gradually, but surely, by his patronage of the artist (and by patronage I mean not patting him on the shoulder and calling him a clever fellow but by employing him, and paying him well for his work), the patron can eliminate the tradesman, as we now know him, in the church. I said, if he wish to; but unfortunately in Ireland, we see rather a steady desire to en-

courage and sustain the tradesman, who is very much a tradesman, because he is (and ever will be by some people, I expect) mistaken for an artist ; or at least as one who employs artists, which he seldom or never has done. If the master tradesman were an exploiter of the work of the artist, this patronage would be fairly secure from attack ; anyway it would not be so disastrous to our churches ; but when the capitalist tradesman is just an exploiter of foreign, or even native, inartistic artizanry, when he is often an importer of foreign artizanry—not art, mind you—when he is the most mentally degraded of all shopkeepers, employing those only a little less degraded, however skilful as mere tradesmen they may be, then it is time to have done with the tradesman altogether.

If the tradesman cannot be reformed, if he cannot, in his turn, become an artist by miracle if not by birth, he must go altogether out of the church before progress can be reported. That beast of prey, as we know him so well in the church, must change his spots ; that hawk with his talons on altar, pulpit, and shrine, must become a dove ; that cold slimy hypocritical crocodile, that can almost shed ready-made tears of joy at a dedication luncheon, must become a warm-blooded harmless lamb, or he must disappear altogether before we can have worthy works of art in our churches.

I do not love these tradesmen who have usurped the place of the artist in the modern time-serving economy of life and religion. I do not love them,

within the bounds of their trade. I know none of them in Ireland—personally—I have always avoided knowing them ; but I judge them in their works, which all the world can see, and judge their art by. “ Judge not, that you be not judged,” cannot apply to his art ; that maxim is for the man himself, and him we cannot judge.

I know I have said things about them, and about jobbing architects (who have the same instincts as the tradesmen), which things, no doubt, they may in the supremacy of their power despise ; for their power is indeed supreme in this country to-day. I know I may have said things which may seem strange, even unreasonable and possibly spiteful to you ; but I ask any of you, who know a work of art when you see it, to think what I have said and am going to say, over quietly, and at your leisure, and to bring your reason to bear upon it. Ask yourself how can it be possible for a tradesman, or a trade journeyman (as he appears to-day), to produce works of art, when the temperament of an artist is always against the duplication of any work, expressing some emotion, some mood, some idea, once felt never again to be felt in a like manner, or under exactly a like condition ? How can it be possible ? I find it difficult to believe that the tradesman can ever feel as the artist feels ; or if he can, that he has the power to express that feeling in terms of art ; and without that power to express that feeling one cannot be an artist, or a master of the medium that one has chosen in which to attempt


that expression. The only real attribute which distinguishes an artist from other folk, is the craft to make others feel, *i.e.* by the work which the artist has created; and Tolstoy (whose reasoning is often erratic) is right in what he has written on *that* point.\* If the artist cannot do that his vocation is not art, or, in a closer analysis of the point, his vocation is not in that line of art upon which he is trying to balance himself. For a man may fail as a painter and succeed as a musician,—as a poet, and succeed as a sculptor. Nay, even some of our worst tradesmen may be artists for all we know; we can only judge them by their works; we may have tradesmen who instead of being monumental masons have their true vocation in millinery. I feel that sometimes, when I see the way they can use the drill in marble lace work; we may even have stained glass manufacturers who are possible musical composers—nay, musical instrument makers. For were they to turn their energies in the direction of gramophones they could do no worse than they have done in stained glass; a gramophone may only make one long for sudden death, but some of our stained glass windows make emigration suddenly attractive.

I suggest again that one must operate, as well

\* Tolstoy says:—"The artist, if a real artist, has by his work transmitted to others the feeling he experienced. . . . If a work be good as art, then the feeling expressed by the artist—be it moral or immoral—transmits itself to other people. If transmitted to others, then they feel it, and all interpretations are superfluous." (*What is Art*, Chap. XII.)

as one is able, directly on the patron, and through him on the tradesman, and so perhaps reforming the latter that he shall not, in time recognize his own past self. For it is against the tradesman as a shop-keeping employer of skilled labour that has no direct concern with art, that I protest ; not against the skilled worker himself, nor against the conscientious employer of artists (if there be any) paying them as artists and not as factory hands. We cannot have too much of skilled labour, which can do the necessary and mechanical part in many of the arts ; for life is short, and the creative and designing mind needs afterwards the assistance of the skilled hand. But I ask you not to confuse this reproductive ability with artistic creation itself ; though the skilled worker, the artificer, or the artisan, may each be, with benefit to the church, an artist in temperament himself. Why I find it necessary to repeat such a self-evident truth as this, is due to the fact that, however self-evident it may be, it is not generally appreciated in this country ; and patrons seem strangely muddled in their ideas as to what is an artist and what merely a necessary skilled workman.

And now, in coming to the interiors of our modern churches, where the tradesman has left his trail over all so unmistakably, I think it would simplify my reflections if I grouped them separately under each of the inner features of a church, in the order that one may often notice units of these features on a visit to the church. And, as briefly as I can,

trusting in your patience, I shall try to indicate why so many of these features are poor in design, often in workmanship, and nearly always unworthy of the traditions of the Church as a patron of the fine arts. 

We will enter, say, one of our fine new "Gothic" churches, by your leave, and we will first, as in traditional custom bound, take holy water at the fine new entrance porch. The holy water stoup is, as a rule, about the only object that is left plain and unadorned; mostly it is merely a hole in the wall kind of thing; and, when inside, just a plain basin, serviceable enough sometimes, but often much too small. The only reason that I can find why our church builders have practised this strange abstention from decoration is that the water stoup is just the very thing that should have ornament lavished upon it. Nothing in the church more lends itself, either by association of ideas, or by its actual utility, to decorative treatment so readily. Those of you who have been to Italy know, only too well, that in the porch of a strange church you have looked sometimes in vain for the regulation hole in the wall stoup, and perhaps have blessed yourself with a dry finger as you pushed back the thick leather-padded door; only to find that, just inside, you are confronted with one of the most beautiful objects in the whole church, and that is a detached and decorated holy water font in which twenty people, maybe, can dip their fingers at one time. Sometimes there is a small outside basin



for holy water, and you may use it ; but you take, as is the custom, holy water on leaving again, and then you see the larger stoup standing by itself within the nave. You also now have more leisure to examine it, and you will probably find that it consists of three important and well emphasized parts ; a base, an intermediate supporting part, often with figures as a motive, draped or undraped, and, on top, the ample bowl for the holy water. Many of these fifteenth century holy water fonts, in Italy, are more elaborately decorated than are the pulpits in the same churches. For my own part, I have never felt any disappointment when I have found a plain wooden rostrum for the preacher, in a fine church, elaborate in other particulars ; but I have, when, as it has sometimes rarely happened, there has been no other holy water stoup than a basin on a shelf in the porch. The holy water fonts should be large, especially in Ireland, where twenty people are all taking the water at once ; and if large they must necessarily look important, and, therefore, they should be designed by artists who are conscious of that importance, and capable of dignifying and beautifying it.

Well, we are inside the church now, and maybe, while our eyes are accommodating themselves to the changed light, we shall have discovered the stained glass windows, at least those facing us over the high altar. There may be but one large one of many lights and panels, or three moderately wide

ones, or five narrower ones, or even seven, over that high altar ; but we shall soon discover them, and count them carefully, and want to know something about the man who made them. We can't escape them, for we must turn toward the sanctuary, or we can't walk up the nave. There they are, in blackened reds, and reckitty blues, and pasty emerald greens, and dirty mulberry purples ; often so opaque that they might be of opus sectile lit by a strong ray of light from some artificial interior source. I hardly know what to say about these windows, and the aisle windows, without quoting or repeating what I have said before, and which many of you probably have read. So I will say a few words about the good people who so generously give the money for the erection of these windows ; as well as for other works of what should be art, and which works so seldom are.

As I pointed out in the beginning of my lecture, the money (or what represented money—emoluments, honours, remuneration of some kind) for the payment of artists, came from Popes, Kings, nobles, chiefs, and princes. Sometimes from the private family fortunes of bishops and prelates. But here in Ireland to-day, the benefactors, when resident in the country, are, at the most, fairly prosperous middle class people, with but occasional landed gentry. To these may be added in many parishes the comparatively poor, who so freely give toward general collections undertaken by the clergy.

About the benefactors who are, so often, directly

responsible for statues, altars, windows, communion rails, benches and other details, I hold that no benefactor, no matter how great his benefaction, or bequest, has a right to impose his gifts upon a parish (not to mention a city, or a province) without leaving freedom to the artist who is to carry out the work. If the benefactor is of moderate means he would do well to unite his gift with that of others, and the trustees of the gift should consult with some artist, or artists, of acknowledged reputation, and not pecuniarily interested in the work, if possible. But the greater the benefaction, the greater the need of this careful consultation ; for it is a very serious matter this permanent establishment in a church of a stained glass window, or a pulpit, or a choir screen, or whatever it may be. Once done it is almost impossible to be undone, in a land that has outgrown all its lake eruptions and volcanic shocks ; and bog-slides never seem to happen near churches. In the smaller benefactions the donor might remember that by giving his money into safe keeping, and not insisting that it alone shall purchase something definite, and thus minister to his vanity, there is a fairer chance that a more worthy and necessary work of art will be the result of his self-sacrifice. Surely with the vainest, in any act of a charitable or devotional nature, vanity should be here suppressed. Surely it would be a more satisfying thought afterward that a little money had helped toward a fine altar, or a window, than that the little money of itself alone had stirred some little mind to produce

an unworthy bit of cheap trade art. I am not saying that any, or every, fine work of art must necessarily be expensive, for that would be untrue ; I am insisting that where cheapness (as it often does) means inferiority, it would be a nobler act of sacrifice on the part of the donor to allow his benefaction to become merged in a wider fund, that it might be partly productive of a nobler work of art by an artist whose thought will have to be paid for.— Straying away from our churches and Ireland for a moment, some of you may remember the reply that the painter, Whistler, gave to a counsel who was cross-examining him in a famous libel suit, several years ago. Whistler had said that a picture of his had taken him a day, or at most, two days, to paint. The price of this painting was, I think, two hundred guineas. Said the counsel in surprise, “ And you charge two hundred guineas for the work of two days ! ” “ No,” replied Whistler, “ I charge two hundred guineas for the knowledge of a lifetime.” And not alone an artist, but many a counsel might have given a similar answer to a similar question. Knowledge, the result of a life’s study, must be well paid for ; especially if it be knowledge added to genius, born and not (as it never can be) acquired. But an artist need not be a great genius to do tolerable work for the church ; yet he must be something other, and better, than a tradesman ; and small benefactions as a rule stimulate only the tradesman. It would be better to give five hundred pounds for a window that is designed and

carried out by an artist, than two hundred for one that is the rapid work of a foreign, or even of a native trade firm. I do not say the difference need be so marked as that, it may often be only a difference of tens, not of hundreds, but in any case design and special artistic aptitude cannot be purchased as cheap as factory art. Nay, sometimes, money may be actually saved by dispensing with unnecessary windows or other adornments and using part of what is saved on more necessary ones.

Some of the most beautiful churches on the Continent, and in England, are disgraced by windows such as we have here in Ireland. I see more reason every day for saying harder things about these in Ireland than I said in the *Irish Rosary* three years ago. Many of them must really be the most disgraceful windows in the whole world. It is almost sullyng the name of art for me to use it here in connection with much of this stained glass, much that we have here in Dublin for instance. But the saddest thing of all (though it has its amusing side as well) is to find that the very defects that make a window inferior are held by a certain type of critic (save the mark), to be something very like a perfection of qualities. For example, I have lately seen an illustrated pamphlet, or publication, which has been issued by a country newspaper office, in which somebody, who modestly hides his identity, sings the praises of all the work in a certain important Irish country church. I will quote a little of what it says, because I believe the booklet,

or book (for it contains enough matter to make a considerable volume) has been widely circulated among the clergy. In one place, after referring in general to what the writer terms the "exquisite symbolism" of the windows, he takes each in turn, and tells us how they are so fine. Of the first he says :—"We look upon the window and behold a life-size picture of Pope Sylvester bearing a shield, upon which is shown rays of light proceeding from inner rays of light, beautifully representing the *lumen de lumine* of the Nicene creed." That window does not attract me ; I feel sure that rays of light do not come through any part of the Pope except his shield. In as many words as those quoted might a tradesman impose on the Rev. Mother of a convent which wanted a few chapel windows. After ringing the changes through several pages on similar strained symbolism in the windows, he comes to a large one and says :—"The correctness of the enormous number of details in this window must have involved great time and research, and archæological knowledge." Now it is archæological knowledge that is one of the lesser banes of progressive art ; it has its uses perhaps, but—like cast-iron "symbolism"—it is always cramping and dominating the expression of the emotional principle in design. Of another window he says :—"The artist seems to have followed closely the picture, 'Christ amongst the Doctors,' by Gaudenzio Ferrari." Of another :—"This is a striking picture for many reasons ; it is a picture of holy labour and

of the purest domestic bliss. . . . It follows the general outlines of the 'Holy Family,' by Murillo, which is supposed to be the very best of his works." Of yet another he says :—" Away in the distance is shown a range of beautiful mountains; on the top of a rocky eminence is placed the indestructible citadel of the Catholic Church. . . . An admirable picture is this, and executed with the precision of an antique cameo."

Now, if these windows are pictures, with effect of oil painting, or of landscape distance in any medium (and, let us grant successfully gained, until we see the windows) then are these same windows failures as decorative stained glass; as stained glass at its true value as glass. Complete failures, and there is no other term for it. I must add here that I have not seen these windows, and reading this long descriptive account of them, and of everything else in the church has been the means of keeping me from paying it a visit.\* But how can one be tempted to go there when he can read in the same publication :—" The best specimens of —'s work. . . . is the representation of the Twelve Apostles in the clerestory windows over the transept arches. They are placed at a high elevation, yet so skilfully are they designed that they appear most distinct, and are often taken for oil paintings." (!) This extract refers to the mosaic work, by the way, and it is added by the writer that :—" every

\* I don't intend to see them if I can help it; A hundred times bitten has made me more than shy.

parishioner is proud to know that in the mosaic representation supplied to the Church, S—(an Italian) took for his models the famous statues of Jacobelli.” !

I am afraid that many desirable patrons of art will not quite appreciate the unconscious humour of these extracts ; but any artist, especially a stained glass worker of any faith in himself, will find amusement in the praise of defects which should have been just the thing to avoid. If such are represented as excellencies, not only in this publication, but in many a newspaper in the country, we are brought face to face with a problem how to get the patronage in the country to know the difference between fine decorative art, and meretricious commercialism pandering to ill-formed taste. Patronage in the country reads the newspapers; and if the newspapers employ men to write up these churches, men who know very little about art, it seems futile attempting to operate on public opinion so long as these things are written. One can only hope that a patron, here and there, does not read the newspapers, or has an art education above the level of most of the art criticism in them; and that setting an example in certain places by erecting fine windows, this craze for the product of the commercial and General Art Supply firms will gradually abate ; and such firms be left to their own mercantile consciences, and the bliss of feeling that commercial virtue is its own commercial reward.

To import an artist in stained glass, when one



as good can be found in the country, is wisdom itself, compared to importing a foreign tradesman, or his work ; and why this should be done is beyond *my* unravelling. It must remain always a mystery, this preference for foreign glass, when we can so well design quite as bad, if not worse, ourselves. It is simply grotesque, if the grotesque can be simple, this erecting of inferior German and French windows, and this puffery of it in the press ; and we who go to these churches and try to say our prayers, have an uncommonly hard time of it trying to forgive everybody concerned.\*

Continuing our survey of the interior, when we have feasted our eyes on the "choice" windows, we may perhaps direct our attention to the high altar facing us. You will remember, of course, that you have not seen that particular altar before ; yet it seems an old acquaintance, if not exactly a friend. And how is it that you recognise every pinnacle, niche, canopy and every crocket upon it, if you have not seen it before ? Well, it is because it is a "beautiful specimen," (as I have seen it called in a newspaper) of the "Gothic" sculptor's art. *A specimen*, that is just the right term for it, but I draw the line at beautiful. It is a specimen of a very numerous genus, or family, all being as like

\* "A patriotic impulse may do what an art impulse fails to do ; and if the end be good, all's well. The art of *Irishmen* may be an 'open sesame !' in places where the art of the *artist*, alas, is no key to patronage. But, as exceptions help to prove every general rule, Irish art undisguised as the art of the artist itself has crept into more than one sanctuary among the hundreds in this land."

one another as peas in a pod. Some of them, like the peas, are larger than others, but the specimens are all of one family. You will note the pinnacle in the middle, and the pannelled niches with canopies ranged on each side. If the sanctuary is wide enough we may find three or four sections, or panels on each side ; if narrower, perhaps only two. The design does not depend upon the sculptor, it depends upon measurement first, and upon the family, or genus, afterwards. You will note the same polished shafts to the columns in all of the family, and measurement here does not restrict them so much. They can go up as high as the funds at the disposal of the patron. Sometimes they carry up a pinnacle to hide a stained glass window, and then our emotions are divided between gratitude and disgust. Sometimes on these altars there are figures of saints, and then our emotions are divided between wonder and despair.

In no sense of the word are these altars designed. Any artist with an eye to see can instantly separate the stock pattern from the original work, if there be any there, which is not very often. And although the duplication of the stock pattern may be poor enough ; what may be termed, by courtesy, the original work is often on a lower plane of art still.

I shall not, here, say much about these altars ; I have written upon them, and upon statues, and other work, both in the *Irish Rosary* and *The Leader*, and it gives me no satisfaction to repeat myself ; but before I pass to the statuary

—detached statuary—permit me to say that what is wanted in Ireland on her altars is colour. We have too much colour on the walls of the churches as a rule, and little or none on the altars. If every altar in Ireland were a *plain table* with a picture upon it in a fine frame, a very much greater variety would have been gained than by these so called “Gothic” altars with their variety of sizes, and little else. But, of course, with painted altar pieces, the mounting of them, and the design of the table and of the gradino itself, may be as varied as the individualities of their designers. I am not pleading specially for painted altar pieces and reredoses, but if we had a few hundred of them in the country, surrounded by unpainted walls, and every picture upon them were even by house decorators, our churches would be more interesting, and the altars themselves (at least from a distance) more effective. But if, as it should be, these paintings were the work of artists, what a pleasure, nay, what a real joy, there would be in performing our devotions before them ; and what a joy it would be to feel that a work of art had been dedicated to the service of the temple, and not a mean weak theft from some book of trade “ designs.”

As I have now referred to painted walls, and as, in our survey of the church, we have had such walls in the corners of our eyes all along since we entered, we can let the statues stand aside for a moment, and for a few words on decorative painting.

About the subordination of painting to the architectural features of a church, I can think, just now, of nothing, *generally*, better to say to you, than these words of John Ruskin :—" The best sculpture yet produced has been the decoration of a temple front, the best painting, the decoration of a room. Raphael's best doing is merely the wall-colouring of a suite of apartments in the Vatican, and his cartoons were made for tapestries. Correggio's best doing is the decoration of two small church cupolas at Parma ; Michael Angelo's of a ceiling in a Pope's private chapel ; Tintoret's of a ceiling and side wall belonging to a charitable society at Venice, while Titian and Veronese threw out their noblest thoughts, not even on the inside, but on the outside of the common brick and plaster walls of Venice." I said, just now, nothing *generally* better, but I should like to particularize, myself, that the predecessors of all these men, Michael Angelo, Tintoret, Titian, and the rest ; predecessors like Perugino, with his decoration of the Merchant's Exchange, the Cambia, at Perugia ; like Pinturicchio, with his decoration of the Piccolomini Library at Siena ; like the earlier Taddeo Gaddi, in the Spanish chapel at Santa Maria Novella at Florence, and the still earlier Fra Angelico at San Marco, and at the Vatican ; and yet before him, the great Giotto at Assisi and Padua ; all these men did much finer decorative work than Michael Angelo, Correggio, and Veronese. And why I particularize in this way is to point out that you may engage a great artist to

paint you a fine picture, and that fine picture may even be the finest picture that that great artist may ever paint, as a picture, but that something else is necessary in a church, or a chapel, than that the picture of itself alone shall be fine. What is necessary is that the decorative impulse must dominate the painter rather than the pictorial one ; and that the delineative, or illustrative, purpose (as I may term it), must be subordinate to that decorative impulse. The architecture of the church itself is, or should be, in a state of repose, and the walls must not be made a stage—a theatrical stage—for violent dramatic action. The pictures upon them must be as restful, from their composition and treatment of necessary action, as are the clergy themselves at the services of the altar, or as restful as the congregation engaged in prayer, from their mental attitude on such occasions. An example of restfulness, and two of dramatic action by the same painter will serve to explain what I mean here, though they are in a palace and not in a church. If any of you look at Raphael's " Parnassus " (or a reproduction of it) that is on the wall in one of the rooms in the Vatican, and then at his " Expulsion of Heliodorus," or at his " Fire in the Borgo," also there, you will be able to contrast the repose of quiet "action" with the unrest of dramatic action. And I have chosen these examples because they are so close together, and the dramatic action, say of the " Heliodorus " is of the same period as the restful action (which is not a contradiction in terms of art, mind) of the

“Parnassus.” But you may say that this is only a question of subject, that *one* needs dramatic action, and the *other* a quieter arrangement and grouping of masses ; but I am not criticising each as a picture, I am just contrasting the two frescoes, so that you may note how one belongs to the wall upon which it is painted, and is as steady to the eye as that wall, and the other, the “Heliodorus,” is all movement ; and so they have served me for great examples of two different motives.\* Well, the motive that we want in our churches is the motive that does not move ; and, though this may seem another paradox, it is an artistic proof that strength always springs from restraint, as from steam in a boiler ; and not from loose and unconfined movement. And if you will take the pleasure, the next time any of you travel, of looking carefully, in this humour of study for the emotion of repose, at such decoration as Perugino’s lunettes in the Cambia at Perugia, or at Gaddi’s work in Santa Maria Novella at Florence, or at Fra Angelico’s decoration of the chapel in the Vatican, or at Giotto’s ceiling at Assisi, in the lower church of San Francesco, you will see yet more clearly the value of this carefully composed steadiness in the pictorial presentment of idea.

But where we have figured wall-embellishment in Ireland—I hardly like to call what we have, decoration—we have a modern realism of treatment which is unsuitable for ecclesiastical walls ; apart

\* The “Mass at Bolsena” is another good example of restful action.

from its poor quality as painting in itself. Where we have decoration attempted at all, it seems to be left to the house painter, or decorator as he is termed; and between the incapable artist, who has failed in his opportunity, and the decorating tradesman, our Irish churches are in such a pretty state of conglomerated ugliness that it seems hopeless to expect the conversion of them into anything beautiful. The only thing to do, is for us to deprave our taste as rapidly as possible, and so exact some pleasure from them while life still remains to us. But, seriously, what can be done with the churches that have, so far, not been in this respect irrevocably disfigured? Well, I can see no other way than to leave the walls alone for a time and get colour into the churches by the erection where possible, of a few fine altar-pieces, until the general taste of patrons has improved. Then, from altar-pieces men may rise to the working out of more difficult schemes, which the fit decoration of walls entails. For, though lightly and unthinkingly undertaken at present, the decoration of a wall is an achievement requiring a greater grasp of architectural essentials than the painting of detached altar-pieces. The altar generally separates, to some extent, the picture from the church, but the wall decoration should become, so to say, a part of the architecture itself. It always, at its best, did this in England, in Italy, in ancient Greece or in archetypal Egypt.

And now in passing to the remaining aids to

devotion in our churches (the statues on their pedestals) I shall be very brief. A writer once said in *The Leader*, "The artistic soul of poor Ireland understands Ober.\* It would remain dumb if an artist appealed to her." [*The Leader*, September 6, 1902.] I replied on this point :—"Is statuary really needed at all in churches if the soul of the country is æsthetically dead? In the Penal days, devotion was never so fervent, although statues, and chapels, and churches in which to place them, did not exist. The imagination of the people then was uncontaminated by ugly crudities— . . . and the devotion of the unlettered peasantry was as pathetic, as intense, and as great—nay, greater probably—than it had ever been before. It was a greatness that sprang from no marble incentive. But now the church has gained power, and the people comparative freedom, and all recognize the necessity to maintain the old and to evoke a fresh spirit of devotion. Are the means used really adequate? The resultant devotion should not lose quality. I would advance this thesis: no statuary or good statuary."—I wrote two articles in support of that thesis; and I am still of an opinion that it would be better to have our churches void of all statues than to see them as they are. Let us, if we must have coloured statues, have the best that the artist can create, not the worst that the tradesman can import; or let us have none at all. But, above

\* *Ober*, be it stated for the uninformed, is the symbol for poor, cheap, coloured, imported statuary.



all, let us have the colour of marble, and bronze, and ivory, and alabaster, the colour of material itself in preference to the colours of the painter. I know that in Dublin, at the present day, there are artists employed in colouring plaster ; and their colours are the best that I have yet seen used on modern work of this nature \* ; but I should like to think of this as only a step toward better work ; toward a raising of the public taste to desire statues that shall have the contrast of the flesh parts with the draped parts (or the harmony if you like) a contrast that comes of the texture and colour of *materials* beautiful in themselves. As for bronze, I know of only one work (now in progress) for an Irish church, and that is a relief † for an altar ; and where we have marble uncoloured (for I know of no examples of stained marble) we have figures almost as poor in design as the coloured plaster figures confronting us in every church, and in every tradesman's shop.

Artists *must* be employed at this work, and they must be kept in the country by a wise and generous patronage. Statues, of any account as art, are the most costly objects in a church. A cheap plaster cast must necessarily be a duplicate of something else ; for, if it be original, it will not be cheap, as the design of the sculptor must be paid for, and the saving will only be on the value of the material and the labour of the mechanical carver and painter.

\* The *Irish Art Companions* of Clare Street, Dublin, have produced some interesting coloured plaster. 1904.

† [See *Introduction*.]

I have now indicated at some length why we should be dissatisfied, and how it is that many are dissatisfied, and rightly so, with the work carried out in our churches in recent years. We, who dislike what we see, have a stronger reason for our dislike than that oft-quoted paraphrase from Martial :—" I do not like thee, Dr. Fell, the reason why I cannot tell ; But this alone I know full well, I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."—We have too many reasons for *our* dislike, and well grounded ones ; for they are grounded in principles that form the basis of all fine and satisfactory art. In the words of a writer on architecture,—who wrote fifty years ago—whom I have never heard quoted in my life :—" Nothing can increase the value of a design, which does not increase the labour of the designer. (by designer I do not mean draughtsman). Every reference to precedent should do this, and will do so with every true artist. But the false artist refers to precedent, to save himself trouble ; that is, to cheat his employers, by diminishing the value of his work, without diminishing its apparent value. . . . That nothing is beautiful which is without motive, most of the thinking will admit ; yet it is necessary to add, that *novelty* and *antiquity* are no admissible motives. But though age affords no reason whatever for the *adoption* of anything, it gives every reason for its *examination* and *study*. We cannot too strongly instil into the reader, that, while *novelty* is in itself neither a beauty nor a fault, but totally immaterial, novelty sought for

its own sake is the destruction of art. The end of art is truth. The instant it proposes any other aim, (be it novelty, or to 'catch the spirit' of a particular time or place, *i.e.*, *mimicry*, or any other fancy), it ceases to be art; and what is not art, is not architecture. Aim at catching the spirit of *all* true architecture, not that of any one style, still less, of a notoriously *false* style." And he furthermore puts so-called "style" and weak design together into a nut-shell very neatly, where he says:—"What avails it to have repeated truly the 990 words for which he could find authority, if the 10 which he was obliged to add are *all* false? It is these ten *alone* that show whether he is an artist or not; and these things, though small, and escaping the casual glance of the public, glare to our eyes as huge blots, totally defacing the routine beauty; though that may form the major portion of the work, and may cause the uninformed to regard it as *pleasing on the whole*." \*

If this architect had been writing of Ireland, and not of England I hardly think he would have said that the 990 words were "repeated truly." However, to draw my lecture to an ending, I ask, who is there living in this country who would not like to see those *ten words* of individuality and personal artistic expression expanding into the 990; so that the *beauties* should be counted by hundreds

\* *Rudimentary Architecture*, by E. L. Garbett; a text-book that would put many a more modern one to shame, for the sound doctrine it contains.

and the *blots* by tens ? Let Ireland have an art of her very own, a modern art, and when the modern legislative chamber of her representatives—independent representatives—comes, no Minister of Fine Art will be needed to check the philistinism of such chambers. An art of her very own ; something which nobody, though he be a future Bonaparte with his armies, or an American millionaire with his purse, could rob her of. For a country may be despoiled of its pictures, or it may sell its statues, but the spirit of art which produced them is contained within the brains, and the flesh and bone, of that country's inhabitants. The art of the future, Irish art, must come from these modern inhabitants themselves, not from the mouldered past ; from those who are of the stock that made the wealth of those who arrogated all the art and culture of this land to themselves. If it do not come from them, it will never be of this country, it will be always more or less of an exotic, and perhaps worse than that, a decadent art.

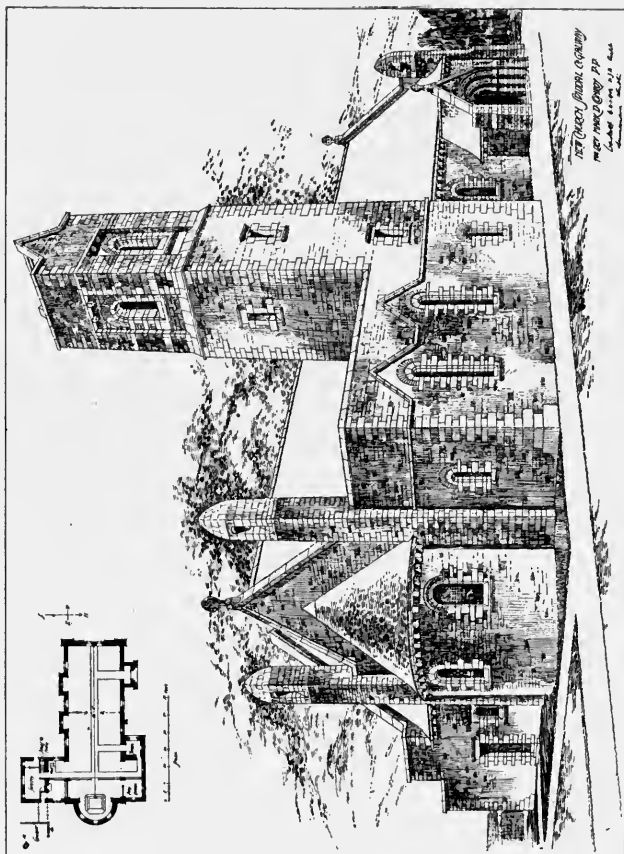
I plead for a national ecclesiastical art, and I have indicated that the way to foster it is for the church in Ireland to patronise her own struggling children wherever they may be found with the souls of artists in their needy bodies. Patronise them directly, not through Schools of Art and Departments, and patronise them with a wise munificence by reserving the money that is wasted on unnecessary tradesman's work and thus increasing the total available for the artist. Patronage

*must* attract art ; nothing else will keep it in the country ; a niggardly and mean patronage may serve the competitive tradesman with machinery and a ledger—I don't know for certain—but I know well that a generous use of money alone will keep art alive in any country, and has alone kept it alive in any Christian country since the dawn of the Christian era.

If, in conclusion of this plea for the artist, I may inflict upon your patience a flight in rhetoric, rising (or, it may be descending) from the necessary almost sordid side of this question into what some of you may consider the region of *rameis*, I would remind you in words of mine own that, I insist, contain certain great truths, however inadequate in force my words may be—I would remind you that art among a people is the great lever which can move mountains of daily doubt when working out problems of life ; that art is surety itself, though that surety is through the defective senses themselves. I would also remind you that though art is by its nature beyond reason, even like greater religion and love, yet the manifestations of art—of power and skill—may be reasoned on and analysed by the most sordid of minds ; and that art, like them, abides behind the golden bars of the “so far and no further,” against which philosophy and a so-called science may break their wings in vain. For art is the greatest factor, after Love and Religion, in the history of the world, and its phenomena are as subtle as those of the soul itself. The world's

histories and periods, dynasties and nations are half its creation ; for art has created all that we can imagine outside of revelation, and which revelation in turn, art seems to have made its own. Art is the great archimage of life ; art can transform the whole visible, commonplace world which every man carries in his mind, into an elysium of stimulative mystery. Nay, I say, that art is a regenerative goddess ; for when she manifests her presence to the soul of man she comes first as a seed, then as the soil itself, wherein that seed will find nourishment ; and finally, and rewardingly, appearing as the blossom of unquenchable joy, carrying new and ever fertile seeds for yet grander growths in the calyx of her maturity.





DESIGN FOR SPIDDAL PARISH CHURCH.

(By Wm. A. Scott, A.R.I.B.A.)



## ON ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.

### I.

In writing about Catholic ecclesiastical architecture in Ireland, my views shall be advanced as a writer about the beautiful in building, not as an engineer, who, so to say, scales the sky with compass and mathematical calculation. For the writer cares not how solidly, how scientifically, a church be built if it be not beautiful when completed. He looks at the sky line of a roof, not into stresses and strains; at the joints of masonry certainly, at the colour and charm of material, but not into the quality of the mortar, nor into the time book of the clerk of works. Solely at the beauty of externals, though these may, indeed, be emphasised by the constructive accomplishments of the architect and engineer. At the design when carried out, not into building as a trade. Just as in sculpture, he cares not how much misplaced energy or skill in reproduction be illustrated, if the illustration be of a poor and weak original.

Puginism, and by that I mean the so-called "Gothic revival," in England, ran a fairly prosperous course. It is true that Pugin himself was hardly done by in many ways, and much that he abhorred is credited to him by those who do not know how hampered he was by the miserable

haste and the cheapening processes of his patrons. But Puginism altogether, and inclusive of the work of Sir Gilbert Scott and others, ran a fairly prosperous course. It is a pity ; but it did. Like everything else that sickens in England, it came over here to expire, and seemingly its death throes are still quite remote. For if there was any difference between the architectural genius for imitation in the two countries, it must be allowed that it lay in a difference of weaknesses alone. Just as in other ways your modern Dublin publican is but a weaker cast of his original in London, your modern architect in Ireland has been but a pinch-beck English architect. Pugin himself, and after him Scott perhaps, was sincere enough. Pugin tried to identify himself with all that was sublime in the fine Gothic work of the old cathedrals and churches of England, the "frozen music" of the Catholic Church ; but his imitators there, and here, had not Pugin's religious or artistic zeal as a motive. They found the fashion he had created ready made, and adopted it, as men do any other fashion, with more avidity than discretion. And we may feel fairly sure that the first strong Irishman that comes forward with anything fresh or rehabilitated in architecture in this country, will have fashion to fight ; and if he win, will be himself the founder of yet another fashion. And the only consolation will be that, if he is slavishly copied as Pugin and Scott were, the imitation will be more "home grown" than has been the case for a very long

period. Pugin's memory, by the way, deserves an honest epitaph—the memory of his imitators in Ireland deserves—well, an unwritten one for the sake of charity.

But why should there be imitation of foreign models in this country? Let Irishmen imitate one another if they perforce must imitate—which I hardly like to grant—but imitation should surely halt at the three mile fishery limit. Just consider what preservation of national, if self-imitative, characteristics there were in the early Italian states, always at war with one another. Just consider how, when Mohammedanism swept rapidly around the shores of the Mediterranean; and into Persia and India, and men had accepted its strange abolition of all human and animal forms in art, the thought still ranged within its imposed limits to express itself independently of other self-bound peoples. Think also how different in manner is Sant' Ambrogio in Milan from San Vitale at Ravenna, or the Duomo at Siena from that at Pisa. Or, in the seventeenth century, when, as it were, the world was closing in, see how Longhena in Venice and those in Rome diversely treated an already stereotyped classic material. Influences, quite detectable from sources traceable in themselves? Indeed there are, but the differences exist despite influences imported. But times are different; the world is so much smaller now. Yes, but have not men souls still? Are they grown smaller too? Is this a reason? Is there an universal

shrinkage ? Did the Mohammedan in Cairo or in Jerusalem have a larger and a nobler soul than the Irishman of to-day ? These are only questions ; yet the nobility of the national soul may be more detectable in the artistic greatness of a nation's work than in its shrewdness, thrift or commercial prosperity—aye, or in the physical courage of its units. The English are to blame ! Aye, there's the rub, for, look you, how the Mohammedan imposed his horseshoes and horseshoe arches on Christian Spain ! It was a like case here ; we left off at Cashel, and God knows when we shall go on again. Well, and it may be pointed out that the Mohammedan architecture, say at Delhi, has the characteristics of India with its pierced and fretted slabs of window marble instead of the bar tracery in western parts ; and most of the details of the Syrian mosques are different, as they were in Persia. And, indeed, English or no English, this used to be so in the Christian architecture of the continent, and in the later Christian architecture of England and Ireland since the Norman-Welsh invasion and English occupation. At least, it was, to some extent, slightly traceable down to the classic revival in quite modern times, and affecting that classic revival here in Dublin. Noticeable, indeed, until Puginism came with its sand-papering away of all originality, of all purpose beyond imitation, of all thought beyond the superficial one of emulating the hardly-used Pugin himself. Pugin's ideas, when carried out, shewed at least the man's in-

defatigable pursuit of all the good things in Gothic art, but what is held to be the very best modern "Gothic" church in Ireland, is but an adaptation of those and similar ideas well watered down with weaknesses.

Has everything that could possibly be done in art been done already? Is imitation of the past to be a new law in the world evolved from the conglomeration of bye-gone laws? Now the laws of beauty never die, can never die while earth lasts. The law of reticence, which may be termed a retrogression which is in itself an advance, as a descent in one sense, may be a step forward in another; this law of reticence is a law of beauty. The world now—and the world is a force to be recognised and obeyed in those which are good of its mandates—the world of art now compels under pain of failure this reticence. Reticence, reserve, rejection of things unessential, whatever you please to call this law which abnegates, may be included in the term simplicity. And there are two kinds of simplicity, neither of them foolishness. There is that which comes of a lack of knowledge in things perhaps that may often be unessential themselves, and that simplicity which comes of a deliberate rejection based on an accumulation of knowledge. The latter must be the simplicity of the architect, who is an artist of knowledge, in these days. Circumstance has compelled him to take his unearthed hoard of golden treasure, with its chased and modelled and filigreed crowns and coronets of

empire, and melt it all down that he may construct the simple fillet which may be an irreproachable diadem of conscious sovereignty. His knowledge must teach him to sift knowledge carefully. He must prune down the tree of his knowledge that it may bud and blossom with more concentration of worth, if less abundantly than did the universal tree from which he obtained his graft.

But the architect cannot, if he have the highest of all motives as an artist—individual perfection as an architect—take his modern simplicity ready-made from another modern. Neither can he take his simplicity directly from examples of the earlier days when this apparent reticence (referred to above) came of a lack of knowledge in things themselves often unessential to beauty. It is true he could “design” a replica of the Parthenon, or of the Lombardic Sant’ Ambrogio, or of Cashel, (at which the Greek would, with all his wisdom, have smiled derisively,) or of Salisbury fane; and well it would be if he did no worse than faithfully repeat. His simplicity must be taken from nobody, past or present; it must come of conscious rejection. For we cannot destroy knowledge gained, and there is no such thing as forgetting. He must know, and he cannot know too much; but he must not speak all he knows; or rather, in the concrete speaking of his thought, he must summarise all his thought.

If he be an artist he will, when designing a church, consider its destined locality first of all. Truly, the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice

would be beautiful on the banks of one of our canals in Dublin, as its beauty is of itself, but much of the beauty that comes of its harmony with its surroundings would be lost. The Parthenon on Tara Hill would hardly be the Parthenon of the Acropolis in ancient Athens. The locality is worthy of much thoughtful consideration; and when, as it may happen to-day, an artist has not grown up amid the exact surroundings of the site which the building is to occupy, a study of the locality is imperative to success in perfected harmony. Then, if he be an artist, he will consider the material as well as the harmonious lines in sympathy with the landscape and the climate. To a great extent the broad simplicity of olden work lay in the use of the material nearest at hand. The writer is only concerned with the outward beauty of material, of course, but it will be often found that durability and usefulness go hand in hand with beauty. The breadth and strength and fairness of Pentelic marble was surely at one with the broadening effects of Grecian sunlight; and the plains of alluvial Lombardy, with its sharp winter and fierce-glowing summer, at one with the brick of soft reds and all the browns and purples that lie in terra-cotta work. And in a granite and limestone country the best architecture will come of their use. If there be marble where there are gray skies, it will be found that that marble will be in harmony with the Creator's disposition of climate. If there be slate in the quarries, or if there be clay, or if there be straw

in the fields, wherever they be found, there they may be fitly used. There is almost a divine law as well as an artistic law against importation; and if this be straining fundamental ideas overmuch to suit the mood of a writer, still in most lands the natural elements of variety, of colour, and of beauty are to be found generally in the earth around. No elementals are too elemental for serious consideration if the beauty of harmony be any object to the artist. And here in Ireland are to be found hard, gray limestone, sparkling granite of the mountains, plastic clay in the plains, slate in the hills, together with the rarer and darker marbles, clouded indeed, and black, like much in the history of the country. These are some elementals as a basis, which, if the architect despise, will, in the despising, revenge themselves by preaching down his own truer instincts. There have been palaces and places that were holy, built in a city of the sea which had no native stone or marble, nor even timber. Yet, as the old-time masted barque of sturdy oak, or the modern funnelled ship with curved prow of steel, takes the beauty of contrast from a bed of liquid buoyancy, receding into an horizontality which is a neutral background, so does the marble magnificence of Venice rest like a mighty ship upon the expansive and isolating lagune. The sea exceptionalises by its indifference to the shore; by its expansive foiling that sets with its grandeur both a towering granite pharos or a buoyant little Connemara coracle. But among the

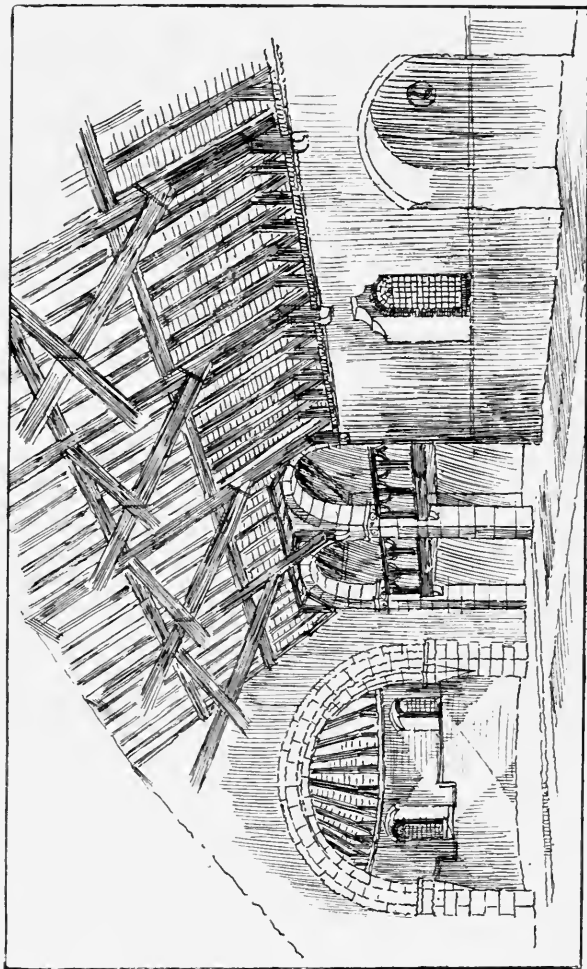


brown bogs and gray hills of this Western Isle ; among its green pastures where the stone crops out in the land of the more virtuous folk that inhabit it, even as the rugged and hereditary purity of their natures underlie much that is but a jest of vice—here, indeed, the imposition of surroundings must be recognised and obeyed if the harmony of earth and art, of country and beauty, be desirable. And if it be not desirable by the architect, we have not the artist that loves essentials.

“But, good friend and writer, I fear you have but a wandering wit ; cannot an Irish carven saint in the statuary marble of Carrara be fit in a limestone church of the hillside ? What may be more beautiful than Venetian mosaic in the vaulting of a native brick apse ? ” To such an interlocutor I would respond that I have not yet come to what is hidden from the eyes that rest on landscape and church as a whole. And if there be no fine statuary marble in a country, maybe the bronze of copper and zinc and tin of the mine, is the better outdoor material ; and, as for interior work, well, the church walls, or the gallery walls of a mansion, hide the external view, and, so far, we might be anywhere on earth. In these essays I desire to draw rather an arbitrary line between sculpture and architecture, though their overlapping must necessarily obtrude itself in discussing details.

It were strange indeed—if it were not impossible—that any good work of art should not bear some resemblance in general treatment to much that has

already appeared in the world. The world has, indeed, grown smaller. With all the rejecting and sifting of knowledge, even though one began by balancing a steeple or a dome as a foundation, and finished off with an inverted crypt for a sky line, some resemblance would remain to cavil at, when laughter was exhausted and curiosity was satisfied. And since I set about writing this essay, I have seen, both in the *Freeman's Journal* and in the *Leader*, a notice of the design for the new church at Spiddal by Mr. W. A. Scott, in which the style is referred to as "Hiberno-Romanesque" in the former instance, and as "a development of the Irish Romanesque" in the latter (which is by Mr. Edward Martyn, the distinguished writer and lover of good art), probably because of certain resemblances between the round arches, etc., of early Irish work and Mr. Scott's "development." Two illustrations of this excellent design—one an exterior view, and one, a rough sketch of part of the interior—accompany this Essay. For my part, I think the word "development" unsuitable just yet in the history of recent Ireland. Things seem more to be beginning again. But to carp at words thoughtfully used is far from my intention, and development is a better word than imitation. Mr. Scott, with his knowledge of good work, took, I fancy (for I have not cared to ask him), the landscape, the material and the type of the people who will worship in his church; who tell beads and pray simply rather than desire garish light to read bulky manuals



SPIDDAL CHURCH INTERIOR.  
(By W. A. Scott, A.R.I.B.A.)



of devotion. Necessary walls with a roof, and a tower for bells, and a gallery for singing, made up the problems to be worked out. That it bears some resemblance in many of its features to early Irish work, is the result, I imagine, only of studying this problem sincerely, and hence the result. And a very charming result it is. I may refer indirectly to this church again. Just here, I may say of it, that, for my part I much preferred the round one of the two towers proposed. If any "development" of olden types is more desirable than another, it is the development of the round tower; and then, perhaps, an angular apse, or a square shape of some kind, would have been found necessary as a contrast. To be sure square towers have some advantages not possessed by round ones, and the ability of the designer lies in carefully weighing advantages.

Many small churches are "designed" and built, of late, as a row of suburban villas are designed and built, or, at least, in a somewhat similar manner. The designs are stock for any architect, and he chooses his stock, and shuffles it a little. Just as in altar "designing" whoever does the business seems to have an adjustable pattern that can be divided, expanded, or contracted to fill any space. The architect is not required to think out real problems of art—his only mental trouble is a pecuniary one, like the contractor's. It is *all* a matter of specifications and estimates and tenders and so-forth. These things in church architecture,

nay, in all fine architecture, in truth, should be quite subsidiary. Thoughtful, original and fine art seems to be of no importance whatever; though, indeed, the word "art" is used sometimes in the description of modern churches, as a photographer might use it, as the shopkeeper of "novelties" uses it, with his "art" picture frames and his "art" chimney-vases and his "art" draperies. Its use is to these as a label. And I have seen an advertisement somewhere with the words, "best style of art," in it. Whatever it means, I don't know. It is amusing, this use of the word "art" by those who wish to label stock of any kind. And I feel sure that some artists, if they were asked to name their profession, would prefer to name it as one of beauty than of "art." At least, the word "beauty" has never been more grossly abused than the word "art." But where is there beauty or art among the shuffled, and re-shuffled, stock of some of our late "Gothic" churches?

Let the observer, then, who knows a work of beauty when he sees it, visit Loughrea, as the writer did but a few days ago. He may probably have heard about this building, which is externally completed, and he may be, as the writer was, filled with a cheerful and allowable anticipation of a work of beauty. This is the Cathedral for the diocese of Clonfert, let it be remembered. Is there anything to be honestly praised in the design; is there anything which he can gladly praise? He may know how erratic education in Ireland has affected everything,

and knowing the poverty of an emerging proletariat, of a faithful, generous, yet Philistian peasantry, of a clergy who leave everything to the architect, mostly on recommendation—knowing all the sad causes, yet can he praise anything but industry and generosity? \* The church is solidly built, indeed, masonry of the best, masonry as excellent as anything to be found among modern churches perhaps, † but I write of the beauty of more essential things than solidity. And whether it be the architecture of Loughrea, or say St. Kevin's, Harrington Street, or Kingstown Parish Church, or Dolphin's Barn Church, or St. Joseph's, Berkeley Street, or St. Peter's, Drogheda, or the little Dominican Church in the Claddagh at Galway (a step towards simplicity certainly), examples taken at random; or many a country and city church that I could name, there is but one name for it, "Stock,"—British stock on the whole—stock decidedly shopworn into the bargain. And in Loughrea, it will be only by the excellent carving of the interior caps and corbels, by erecting fine altars and by beautifying with good decoration generally, that it can be saved altogether from the general classification as a "stock" church of worn-out Puginism. Some corbels already finished in the church are full of merit and charming character. ‡

That an architect may have studied hard and

\* See *Introduction*.

† I am afraid I have overpraised this masonry.

‡ By Mr. Michael Shortall.

travelled much, and may be able to appreciate the original beauty from which his stock is derived, is another matter ; yet, no number of years spent in globe-trotting, cathedral exploring, gallery lounging, or studio haunting, will make one an artist ; though it may have been useful in the development of a critical faculty. And no number of stock patterns carefully selected and arranged, will necessarily make a good design. But an observer who knows and feels the original beauty of many of them, is a step toward a juster appreciation of any conglomeration of them. If he finds that some of these beautiful patterns, or details, have been unfaithfully tampered with in imitation, and, furthermore, find that these stock imitations are really admired, not for their resemblance to their foreign types, irrespective of degrading violations, but for themselves, he, either as a critic, or as one wishing to help by his pen toward the erection of noble churches, has little choice allowed him in the expression of opinion.

One could of course write much about our modern churches, Gothic and Ungothic (meaning by about, around the subject), without striking at essentials of beauty. For the solidity of the building, the material itself as building material, its cost of erection, the names of the benefactors and the parish clergy to whose energy and capacity in solicitation its erection was due—these are enough for pages of amplification. But one, who is not a newspaper scribe, cannot do that. Neither am I,



in this short article, going to take *seriatim* all the newer churches of Ireland and criticise them carefully. What I have seen so far gives me sufficient ground to generalise, without doing either. And travelling a few hundred miles only to be disappointed for one's trouble certainly damps the spirit of the most ardent critic. Let me then, after this digression, return to generalising essentials.

I have referred to locality and material as factors which should not be despised, and ought to be loved. If four walls to shield from wind, and a roof to protect from rain are other than plain walls and plain sloping roof, some essential beauty of architecture has been either nobly attempted or ignobly borrowed. It is usually cheaper to borrow, but it is seldom wise. Let us consider about windows for light and space for air, for in the consideration of our essentials we can still criticise indirectly the nearest church in our town; we, the reader and the writer, together; and treating of them only because they may well become enemies of beauty under certain conditions.

In a Catholic church, or in any church for that matter, daylight of some kind is necessary, unless the decorations, like those in an Egyptian tomb, are to be only discoverable by the aid of artificial light—or, like the inner sculpturing of a sarcophagus, intended for the all-seeing eye of the Deity alone. Now, this daylight in a Catholic church may easily be let in garishly, and be unnecessarily strong. With the needs of other churches we are not con-

cerned, but in our own places of worship the unfeeling and bleak diffusiveness of a conservatory should be avoided. We want to consider no London County Council Building Act requirements as to the "area of glass," compared with the "area of the floor." A church is neither a barracks nor a factory, nor is it a superior villa of stock-broking. At least it should not be so. And self-respecting and devotional peasantry who go to Mass to pray and not to rustle silk dresses, not to stare at one another, but to tell their beads—not to whisper about bonnets—require but a moderate share of light. Enough light, perhaps, for a large type manual of devotion, but no more, solely on their account. They don't want it. Yet enough light is needed for sculpture, for painting, and for the carrying out of ecclesiastical ritual. But this light must have quality different from the outer daylight as well as being regulated in quantity. Stained glass sometimes improves the quality, but not always; and a church may be finely lighted without the aid of it. The quality in that case may be indirectly owing to the way quantity has been arranged in conjunction with interior shapes.

Now, your every-day architect cares little about quality in anything, unless it be of material allowable by the estimate. He is not entirely to blame, because he is perhaps the creature of a bad cutting down system, and his soul is warped early in his career. He may welcome glass if it be cheaper

than masonry—and space for glass is sometimes cheaper. And the estimates, and contracts, and tenders, and specifications and what not, are burdens that have to be borne with patience, no matter what may be his personal desire. These things are bugbears to the artist who places his art first. So we get large, plain windows, sometimes when smaller ones would be better suited to the beauty of the external church, and the quality of the interior light is abandoned by one who may indeed love it. Even gloom has its beauty if judiciously contrasted with brighter passages of light, and “dim religious” became a hackneyed description mainly because everybody saw the beauty in what it described.

And, before we consider air space, as it is termed, it may be fitting to say of estimates and prices in general, that it is a cruel thing that the young artist of promise should be hampered by lack of money whatever be the reason. It may be that the character of his design should include an open roof in oak, and deal has to be the support. The character suffers. Iron may have to be used—though perhaps as well as it can be used—where bronze ornamentation would have been preferred; and if iron lock plates and handles, etc., to the deal doors, hammered in honest style, be used instead of tame, uninteresting “stock” patterns, it may be as much as can be squeezed out of the estimate.

About air-space, rather a favourite theme among rule-of-thumb people, it can be said that some of the

most evil-smelling of churches are often lofty ones. Size, beyond certain limitations of course, has not so much to do with foul air as ventilation. Stagnant air may occupy a large space. But in these scientific times the sanitary enthusiast would like to poke his nose into Cormac's chapel, or St. Kevin's "kitchen," were they in use, and write to the daily papers about the insufficiency of air-space. In a village church with some four or five hundred at Mass, the architect who can give some thirty feet of height, and enough floor area for half as many again when kneeling, allowing alley ways for processional purposes, need not trouble further about air space. Why, on the western sea-board, for example, you may have in one hour enough air through an open ventilator to vivify London for a year. On the Connemara coast the air that comes in has only been breathed *once*. The difficulty there seems to be how to keep the air out. And, in addition, if there be an upper window in a gable, or an unseen dormer aperture in the roof, all sheet-iron dog kennels, cast-iron coal scuttles, and inverted chamberpots in zinc or terra-cotta "stock" can be dispensed with as "ridge ornaments." The church should be large enough, and light enough for religious purposes, but it may easily be larger and lighter than needful if beauty be subjected to arbitrary laws about the relations between space and light.

And since sanitation and science have obtruded themselves into this essay despite my earlier intention, I will say that heating, especially for keeping

the interior *dry*, seems to be a more important matter from the point of view of the artist. Painting of all kinds suffers from damp, rapidly and disastrously. The after-laying of hot water pipes is an expensive matter, as the Dominican Fathers of St. Saviour's Church, Dublin, could inform anybody. In a poor country district like Spiddal, for instance, the most that can be expected toward heating the building is the construction of a fire-place in the sacristy, and one near the place designed to accommodate the choir, which will probably need an organ.

Keims' process of "water-glass" painting, or Mosaic, or Opus-Sectile, would, of course, be more fitting than tempera, or oil painting, on plaster walls, in a church where the locality is unusually damp. But hot water pipes, kept well out of sight, might well preserve hundreds of pounds' worth of oil painting besides ministering to the comfort of the people. But open fire-places lend themselves for beauty, if they are frankly recognised as necessities and taken to be made the most of. And then, wherever there is a fire there is smoke. I can hardly conceive the interesting mass of the little Spiddal Church without those chimneys. They are so simple, so homely, so fitted for a tiny wisp of blue, odorous turf smoke.

So then, your ventilation may be so perfect, that in the city your church may enjoy a perpetually transitional whiff of Liffey scented air ; your lighting may be such that the writing of the hundredth psalm

within the circumference of a threepenny bit would be distinctly visible to the eye of an octogenarian ; your heating apparatus may charge the Liffey scented air with the sickly steam of a thousand drying petticoats and trousers—but to the lover of the beautiful, to the critic of architectural form, of mass, of line, of colour, of everything which is essential, those former questionable delights are as woeful as the solidity of an ugly and spacious meeting house, or of an uglier and more pretentious Cathedral. Seriously, more seriously rather, God's House must be beautiful, first and foremost ; all else may follow as subordinate, if requisite, details.

There is, indeed, the beauty of grandeur, of exuberance, of majesty, as there is of simplicity. All that grandeur, that exuberance, and majesty united could do has been done in Europe. Simplification remains, as simplicity began. Yet the beauty of simplicity may include the grand, the exuberant, the majestic. The grandeur of knowledgeable tranquillity, the exuberance that is negatively suggested by the designed note of reserve, and the quiet majesty of structural lines, whatever be their limitations or magnitudes. Distinctive and national characteristics must certainly arise out of this re-beginning and rethinking out of problems. Consider towers, *e.g.* How distinctive were the square campaniles of Florence and Siena, and those of Venice, and those round ones of Ravenna. Note how distinctive all things were in that corner of Europe when men thought for themselves in art. Centuries

seem crowded together in the perspective of time, we know, yet individual character always seems to have been something precious to the builders all over Europe in its best periods. Ireland had its round towers, like Ravenna,—they reached a certain stage (quite an initial stage) of development and then stopped dead. There were causes why this development was arrested—perhaps many causes. Yet with the importation of Norman and early English ready-made styles, Ireland did not altogether cease to think architecturally. The earlier square towers and doorways in particular, and market crosses (as the Kilkenny one, removed in 1776, for example) shewed a distinctive character of the land of their adoption. But distinctively Irish architecture fizzled out in the later centuries.\* Shall the Irish Church with its Irish tower, as a thing of beauty, as a joy for ages, be again built, not necessarily imitated, but *built*? As a joy for ages? Shall we not say in the exact words of the poet—as a joy for ever? For if consciousness after death continue (and we have strong faith and hope in that) may not imperishable ideas that exist long after matter is disintegrated, be coloured by the impulses now derived from the ever Beautiful and Unchangeable? All that is good and sincere in art, all truth that has been transmitted from its source through the channel of invention and design; all extraneous substance that has been sifted, as it were,

\* Perhaps it would be more correct to say that it really fizzled out in the nineteenth century.

through the meshes of thought ; all invading crudities that have been softened in the crucible of refinement, distilled in the alembic of knowledge, such as these may live for all we know, beyond, in everlasting ideas united to all that is blessed and holy.



## ON ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.

### II.

“Borrowed garments,”—runs the proverb—“never fit well.” It is as true of architecture as it is of clothing. Ideas spring eternally the same, wherever man may be—they come, these ideas, from a primal source ; comparison and interchange of ideas modify, but never obliterate. But ideas are strong in some, or weak to the point of insignificance in others. The architect who has but few poor ones, or none at all, is often he who becomes famous, not as a borrower, but as an architect ! Not as a ready-made-clothing-dealer kind of man, but as an honest tailor, and a craftsman, to rank with creative minds ! Let us respect the honest tailor, who is, indeed, often an artist at his cutting-out profession ; let us avoid the humbug of an architect who has not talents that would even rank in relative order with those of the clever tailor.

A well designed church should be the outcrop of a study of local, religious and racial wants and peculiarities, as well as be externally in harmony with its natural surroundings. Religious needs are universal, yet adaptations are necessary. Just as, on the domestic plane (and for the sake of analogy

alone), clothing and the warmth of firing are universal, yet, how the manner of their adaptation varies in accordance with country or locality ! Or it did once before empires were brain-sucking octopi. Thus it was that in Ireland there was the open hearth for turf, for pot hangers and three-legged pots to be suspended therefrom, for the stirabout and for the pan-bread under the ashes, and for cakes on the grid. The fire-place itself became a beautiful thing, with a settle beside it upon which to sit and to watch the boiling cabbage and bacon while the winter rain beat against the small cosy window shutter. And what suits the true need of the Irish country woman better than the ample hooded cloak and the homespun petticoat, or her husband, than the knitted stocking unencumbered by a dragged, frayed and muddy length of trousers beneath the knee ? As with the wants of the man or woman in their homes, or in the ploughed fields, or market place, so with them in a two-fold manner in their churches. With their spiritual needs, and with what may be termed their sub-ecclesiastical needs. These needs, if understood, dictate the general form of the supply ; but it does not dictate the exact character of the form. This character must come from the artist himself, and by this character can he stimulate and satisfy unexpressed yet fathomable longings.

Before I refer to certain details, which are more a matter for the sculptor and painter, though depending in these days on architecture, it may be fitting to enlarge on a not uncommon need among

the folk of a parish which, being a necessary one, ought to be supplied. A parish may become too large for its church. The only way to enlarge many a Catholic church that the writer has seen in Ireland, of nineteenth century construction, is to pull it down and build a larger and a better one. But in the abstract, or with reference to finer work which may be built hereafter, the wisdom in the statement is doubtful. So a few words about additions, lengthenings and widenings.

A building may grow into a fine whole by successive stages. It will not follow that because a building be begun by one man, and in one "style," as it is generally termed by labellers and carried on by another man years after, and in another "style," and still further added to by yet another man fifty years later, or more, that it will lose what is termed unity of design ; though additions and enlargements may be probabilities that unaffected the first conception. We can find a basis for such an opinion if we look for examples in the past, and we may draw therefrom a conclusion that an union of collective designs makes in truth enough unity of general design for beauty ; and furthermore find that greater interest has been accumulating in the processes of growth. Several cathedrals, minsters, and abbey churches, owed their majesty of effect to a successive compilation of developing forms. It is true that in Renaissance days, "an unity of design," carried out in the lifetime of an artist, as in the case of St. Paul's, London, made completeness of in-

dividual purpose an excellent thing ; but in architecture, alone among the arts, a different, a specially characteristic and an exceptional beauty, may come of successive growths welded together. Salisbury Cathedral was built in forty years, and has the beauty of homogeneity ; Ely took four hundred or so to build, and has also the beauty of homogeneity.

If there be any fine modern church erected in Ireland that may require enlargement, or the addition of a choir, or chapels, or porches, or what not, let the artist (provided he be an artist) clap on his addition ; for things will right themselves, and beauty will not necessarily be lost. The unity that is desirable, to produce an union of beautiful forms, is an unity of honest and artistic purpose, such as men had in the mediæval times—in the “dark” ages, as some of us were taught at school. (Men have so much “light” now, God help all those poor university men with disarranged alphabets after their names). It is true, as Ruskin (among other more questionable matters) insisted, that all architecture in the best periods depended upon two classes alone, sculptors and stone-layers—but the professional architect, and the sculptor, and the builder of to-day are each separately specialised, and we cannot put back the hands of the clock, and so far as the building of the framework for sculpture is concerned, the *magister lapicita* must give way to the Fellow of some Architectural Institute or other. Only let him be an artist and justly recognize

the limits of his powers, and go on enlarging *et id genus omne*.\*

\*Ruskin, in his "Seven Lamps," recklessly says:—"What we call Architecture is only the association of (sculpture and painting) . . . in noble masses, or the placing them in fit places. All architecture other than this is, in fact, mere *building*; and though it may sometimes be graceful, as in the groinings of an abbey roof; or sublime, as in the battlements of a border tower; there is, in such examples of it, no more exertion of the powers of high (!) art, than in the gracefulness of a well-ordered chamber, or the nobleness of a well-built ship of war." How much can one hold with Ruskin on this point? When the *magister lapicida*, in mediæval times, was both architect and builder, as well as superintending sculptor, constructional form was still growing, and the architect, as distinguished from the stone layer, becoming more necessary every day. But a large number of the earlier churches in Italy; notably in Emilia, Tuscany and Lombardy, and the Venetian territories, are built of brick, and, so to say, quite constructional in art. Some were afterwards slabbed with marble outside, or inside, sometimes both; some still remain untouched; some have been interiorly remodelled, as the church of St. Dominick at Bologna. They shew a very "high" and constructional art on the part of their builders and designers, though there be little or no stone cutting, or stone laying, on many of them. They were "buildings," but they were designed by constructional artists. Of course, master bricklayers may have been the architects of many of them—not architects in quite the modern sense—but then they needed the same architectural ability that we expect in an architect to-day. Inasmuch as the old master stonecutter could devote himself to the architectonic problems, and to constructional experiments, in so much did he excel his predecessors; that is he excelled by his architectural (building) abilities, rather than by his sculpturesque ones. In the finest Gothic and "Renaissance" buildings, as in the ancient Greek and Egyptian, we find constructional ability predominating; that is, what we to-day should term the architectural ability of the designer—as distinct from the decorating ability—the matter of the first importance. The Parthenon, without the carvings on the pediments, metopes, or frieze, had still been a noble building. There is little carving on Salisbury Cathedral, apart from necessary stone dressing, yet it is a masterpiece of architecture. It may be true, indeed, that, as Ruskin says, the stone-cutter was the builder; but he succeeded in the first place, because of his technical and constructive skill,—this stone-cutter being then (which he is not now) an artist, and employing artists in some periods to ornament the construction. The

So then our Fellows with the necessary talent may do their share of what the Egyptian *magistri lapicidæ* did at Karnak, if they be able. That temple, indeed, started with a simple nucleus, a sanctuary, and grew by magnifying and magnificent growths, until the whole formed, for its own particular pagan purposes, one of the most wonderful master-pieces of cumulative and sincere art. Our Fellows with the talent may do what the *magistri lapicidæ* did at St. Albans, England, and avoid what the modern man of money, mathematics, law and title, and astronomy did fifteen years or more ago.\* This Abbey Church had gathered, as it were, from the garden of Catholic longing all the flowers of developing thought. It grew greatly in size as well as in beauty, until at last its length reached a tenth part of a mile, shedding, as it were, again, its Norman apses and western towers in its progress,

first necessity was to know how to build, to design the building ; and though, without the beautifying by good carving of its details, a building rarely can rank as finest art, yet without the constructional knowledge the building could not have been at all. " Gracefulness " and " nobleness " which Ruskin allows of " building," if they have come of constructional art and ability, shew the power that lies in " building " as an art ; apart from any ornamentation of detail, which may (or may not) add further graces and noblenesses. A modern architect may leave those further graces alone,—even leaving them to a future generation,—but he may well succeed in designing a " graceful " and " noble " building ; and, if so, we ought to be reasonably satisfied, without requiring him personally to carve all the ornament that may be desirable, or even actually, with his own hands, to lay one stone upon another. Indeed, a modern architect often spoils otherwise good work by attempting to design the ornamentation for details ; but should he be capable of designing enrichments it would not follow that he would be a better *architect*, a better constructional artist.

\* Circa 1880-'90. Restorations by Lord Grimthorpe.

and finishing eventually with its great Tudor window at one end, and its Lady Chapel at the other. The man of title, law, mathematics and money, undid much of that cumulative beauty, sticking on the west front a shockingly substantial bit of Puginism, and in the transept a juggled window, besides employing others to make stranger "restorations." However, that is hardly *our* concern, and he made a weather-proof building of the church; but our Fellows with the talent may add as much as they like, provided they add something of individual character, and a national architectural character must surely be the ultimate result.

Coming to sculptured details, between which and architecture an arbitrary modern line has been irrevocably drawn, very few, if any, of our modern "Gothic" churches, on a close examination, indicate any capacity on the part of either the architect or the sculptor to design them—viz., the details referred to. Who "design" them is a matter of indifference, or who borrow them ready made. Sometimes the architect, I fancy, at other times the trade sculptor. Now, a combination of sculptor and architect is a necessity of modern conditions, and provided both be artists, it may sometimes be a harmony fit and desirable. But they must both sing the same song, the song of sincerity and character, and it must be a song that comes of a study of the soul music of the people. Together, they must make up a compound *magister lapicida*, at least in realization and effect. Not

that there be any dictation on either side—and there are sculptors fit to dictate beyond doubt, if there are no architects (who at present do all the dictation)—but let the sculptor take the building and put every bit of character he possesses into the beautifying of its details. The modern architect has no right to condemn, however much he may have the power, unless he prove by his work to be more than an engineer of masses. It is possible that a clever sculptor could build a church after a course of lessons in building construction, but very few architects have the decorative faculty so developed, as to be capable of enriching those parts of their work they rightly know needs enrichment.

To find an example (and it will serve) of how a good modern building—nay a *very good* building—for the architect himself is incorporated in it, indeed—an example of how such can be considerably spoiled by poor details, one may look, among other things, at the chief doorway of the Westminster Cathedral, now externally complete.

Let the reader, who may find himself abroad, look at that Westminster doorway and note those medallions slung between the shafts of the columns, and if he cannot realise their absurdity and undecorative effect, he must be fond of—what, I think, are called by women, parlour wall-tidies—things like pockets hung in places to fill up corners. As if a corner, space, interstice or what-not of a like order, cannot be beautiful when left alone. Whether the late Mr. Bentley designed those medallions, I don't



know, I hardly like to think it, but there they are as an example of what should not be. This doorway could have been enriched in other and better ways, for there never was a worse arrangement on any third rate cemetery monument.

Zeal for inordinate interior enrichment has led to disastrous results. Instances in support of such a statement crowd into the mind of any student or artist who has travelled. But the writer, so far, has discovered no example better serving as such than the church of the Annunziata, at Florence, unless it be St. Peter's at Rome. That is, no example of so much that is fine being spoiled by decoration [fairly good in itself. Of course, where decorative work is all utterly bad and lavishly stupid, like that in many of the later Venetian churches; or to a great extent as in the church of the Gesù and other churches at Rome, these words do not apply; I am now referring to passably good work done in the wrong place, to fairly good decoration over-done in a well-designed church; and, because of it, I am referring to it, as the like may be attempted some day in Ireland. The Annunziata was built, or begun, in the thirteenth century; there is a fine loggia outside, a court-yard next with frescoes, and then, in the church itself, is a nave with rows of side chapels all communicating somewhat as do those in the nave of the Certosa at Pavia, another over-decorated interior though in a different manner. Here, in the Annunziata, a very fine nave, for its style, has been spoiled by the later additions of sculpture over the arches

of the nave. Life-size figures with projecting limbs are holding circular shapes, two figures to each space above the arches. They stand on nothing, they decorate nothing, they explain nothing; they may have been flying around the church and got stuck there like huge blue-bottles upon a very sticky fly-trap. These were probably added in the seventeenth century ; they do not interest me enough to look them up in books, yet they are all fairly sculpted and designed. But all these restless projecting limbs around the nave and the canopy, also over the fine chapel (or shrine) of the Annunziata, near the door, destroy the very richness that marble slabbing (by Silvani, I think) and fine design to carry it, would have given ; and probably did give before those unwanted other things were added. It is well to know when the decoration of a church is finished or when a certain part of it is finished. It is better to spend a thousand, or twenty thousand pounds, on a single jewel for the crown of a Madonna than to decorate walls in places where they need no decoration ; better still to use the money in removing bad work, and replacing it by better. It is impossible to spend too much money on a church, if it be wisely spent for the glory of God, based on a careful study of art for the glory of God. But meretricious effect is so often cheaper than fine simplicity, when we come to consider the intrinsic value of materials. Too much money can easily be spent on a church to gain an effect that it were better without, and far from enough spent on the

simple details that would nobly enrich simplicity itself. Again, money can be wasted on the cheapest of sculptured detail, and saved on excellent work ; for it is the value of the work in the scale of art that is to be considered, and bad or feeble work, or even good work out of place, is surely money wasted. Is it not dear at any price ? Is not a hammered iron candlestick of good design, though the *design* have to be paid for, cheaper than a bedstead-brass one with coloured glass beads, when the design is “stock” for anybody ? I had rather honest red brick beneath my feet than mosaic pavement put down as I have seen it put down here in Ireland, as well as in England. An artist will do with red brick what no tradesman can do with his “mosaic” ; he will make something beautiful, and stock-dealing will never be able to produce a like result. These things are self-evident to every artist who values the one thing precious to all art, individual character and wise reserve.

It may not be the fault of the architect entirely that the interior of churches are filled with such deplorably weak work as that to be seen everywhere in Ireland. Patronage itself may have much to be accused of. A benefactor who wishes to beautify a chapel by enriching some mouldings or capitals, or laying some marble flooring, or erecting an altar for a pious and very praiseworthy purpose, will try to get the most for his money. There is a vanity even in benefactions. One has only to read inscriptions to note that, inscriptions to be read everywhere,

even in graveyards. Quantity has become desirable, and quality is unappreciated. Then the architect comes along, and to the bishop or parish priest the architect appears to be an authority on everything from hot water pipes to stained glass or to Stations of the Cross. The architect produces one of his "stock" altars, telescoped in, or out, to fit the chapel; or his mosaic pavement designed by somebody in the English Midlands, or carved details from his book of "Gothic" capitals or mouldings, and the form of the benefaction grows in conclave, the bishop or the parish priest making a few suggestions. The architect knows the weaknesses of the patron or benefactor, and he seems to play down to them, even when he may be a man who knows good work when he sees it. The benefactor gets the most showy thing possible for his money, and everybody is satisfied except the monumental sculptor who carries out the work, and is generally supposed to have "designed" the altar, or pavement, or whatever it may be. Not being paid by commission as the architect is, this latter man may lose on the work, and sometimes unfortunately does, I believe. Under such conditions as these, "architectural" sculpture cannot flourish as an art, and architecture itself suffers. Bad sculpture may help to destroy what effect for good there may be, and in a church of his own building our third-rate architect should hesitate to make the barely supportable altogether unbearable; for there are things that carry loads besides piers and arches, and walls; there is the

mind of the worshipper who daily says his prayers within the edifice.

The modern architect, necessary as he is, cannot of himself take the place of the old *magister lapicida*. His part of the work finishes at the last stone to be laid. If he attempt an altar we get at the best a replica of some diminutive west front or another, or, perhaps, a miniature cathedral church, or chapel, according to the space at command. Where, as at St. Audoen's, High Street, he erected, years ago, two columns with a classic entablature above, he has not done so ill, for the stone work bounded by these features can easily have canvas stretched across on a timber and zinc backing (for a picture), and the whole might make a fine altarpiece. But with most of the Gothic altars, like toy churches, nothing can be done to improve them, supposing that at any time there were an intention of doing it. At St. Audoen's, by the way, the walls are well spaced out for painting or other mural decoration, and there are niches in the nave for statues. Taking this depressing church as it is, as a "stock" classic one, it could be made internally beautiful with some expenditure of thought and money, and a little clearance of existing statuary.

Although the artist of taste and ability in ecclesiastical work is rare enough in this country, the patron of taste and wealth is almost unknown. Most of the money for church building and decorative features is collected by the industrious clergy, secular and regular; and if these secondary, yet

necessary, patrons have in general but a text book knowledge of art, it is something uncommon. Now text books of art, whether of architecture or of sculpture or of any other art, have had much to do with the perverting of natural taste. The text books of art are unlike text books in any other subject. In geometry or geology sympathy and point of view are unknown, if not impossible quantities ; but the sympathies of a writer of a text book of any art, say Architecture, are very certain quantities. One man's will lie in the direction of line and proportion and symmetry, another's in that of magnitude of engineering achievement, another's in sculpturesque beauties of detail, and so forth, and yet another in work of certain periods or "styles." Now the formation of good taste in architecture, or in any other art, depends not on a study of periods and text book dates—for your man of extensive archæological knowledge is often a man of poor taste, if you probe him deep enough—the formation of good taste depends upon the study of the essential principles of all good art. It is not archæological knowledge that the patron need possess to play his necessary part, it is simply good taste. It is unfortunate sometimes that a patron is a travelled man ; he knows too much about everything except fundamental principles at the bottom of all art, and at the bottom of all good taste. These are not so much to be seen superficially as to be reasoned out thoughtfully. Much travelling is unnecessary for this knowledge of principles. It is

not a question of Gothic, or Renaissance, or Classic, or Romanesque work being the more beautiful by comparison, or even by critical examination ; it is the power to realise the causes that underlie the conclusion that something is justly held to be beautiful in itself, and in a manner suitable or fit to the occasion. We may prefer a Fra Angelico altarpiece in a church, or one by Perugino, to a Titian, where this preference may be based on a discriminating taste for essential religious painting, rather than on a comparison of merit—for in such cases the merit is equal, or at least outside of comparison by a recognizable differentiation of ideals. And we may prefer a Donatello statue to a modern "Gothic" one without any discriminating taste whatever, simply by a comparison of merit. But to prefer the "style" of Cashel to that of Salisbury, or St. Paul's, is to set up a preference, not on a comparison of merit (for the respective merits are outside of comparison) not on the essentials of religious architecture (for all of them contain the essentials) but on a false and arbitrary, and generally fleeting, fashionable sympathy. And patrons are often overburdened with fashionable sympathy.

So that if we find patrons insisting on Byzantine work, or insisting on "Gothic" work, or on "Renaissance" work, or whatever it may be, every thoughtful artist may justly surmise what underlies such insistence. Let the church, or chapel, or altar be erected ; let it have a dome come of Byzantium, or a spire from Sarum, or the columns direct from

the classic Pantheon, but let us be guarded in our admiration of the combined emulative powers of patron, architect and sculptor. As I said in the first part of this essay, it would be well if they did no worse than faithfully repeat. But if we find that the repetitions are unfaithful, and that where they are unfaithful it is owing to a weakness in reproduction or to the greater weakness of an attempt to conglomerate, we should condemn them if there is any honesty still left in the world.

In the first part of this essay I also alluded to fitness of material in interior work, and said that "the church walls . . . hide the external view, and, so far, we might be anywhere on earth." Let me elaborate this a little. The gazing at a church from the outside and from the inside produce two very different emotions—religious intentions aside. The reader may, perhaps, distinguish between these two kinds of emotions stirred by fine architecture. One comes from a love of comprehensive beauty, which is more akin to the peculiar emotions of a landscape, than of a sculpture, lover; though the object that directly stirs them be, by choice, a city street, or a stately square, or a separate building against the sky or mountain-side. Atmospheric effects play a more important part outside than they do inside. These effects are both more variable and more exacting, so that we often hear it truly said, that, in places where the air is generally very clear and the sunlight intense one must see buildings under those conditions or they are not seen



and their beauty felt as they should be ; or, it may be put concisely, the externals of a building depend upon many other externals for due effect. But inside a church the rest of the world is shut out ; harmony here must depend upon the arts entirely ; nature lends, directly, but little or no part to the completed work. It may be a shaft of light from the centre of the dome as in the Roman Pantheon, it may be a few gorgeous patches of coloured daylight through stained glass, as in Or San Michele at Florence, but unless glass itself is to play the more important part (as in La Sainte Chapelle at Paris), the effect due to anything exterior is comparatively little. Art, as it were, is here depending alone upon itself ; isolated, yet strangely gaining freedom within its barriers ; separated from external concomitants, yet uniting with the excited love of beauty in the beholder to generate certain emotions different in order to those before referred to.\*

Hence, even to the artist who cares about the essential fitness of material, the interior brings a welcome freedom of treatment. Statuary marble of Carrara, or alabaster of Derbyshire, or of Siena ; Jasper or Chalcedony of the East, Serpentine of

\* “ All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it. (Did you think it was in the white or gray stone ? or the lines of the arches and cornices ? ) ”

So wrote Walt Whitman, in his fine *Carol of Occupations*. But sculpture and architecture are creations and have objective existence. These creations, in their turn, perform a definite and real function, through the senses of the observer—the function of stimulating subjective and imaginative creation. We bring to everything that we gaze on, ourselves ; but we do not bring the object that we gaze on.

Connemara ; iron, brass, copper, bronze, silver or gold, these are like the colours on a palette here, and to be used as those are used, each playing its part to each. There are no blue skies here, no grav mountains, no forest trees, no open stretch of bogland, no jagged rocks, no dwellings of the rich or poor, no rising sun, nor setting sun ; the world is one remove further away, and art is one step nearer the service of the Sanctuary.

About colour, both outside and inside of buildings, much might be written. The writer has seen a Chinese Porcelain Pagoda, and also the incomparable Campanile called that of Giotto. Both seem to belong to their respective places, whether so seeming by association of early ideas or not it is difficult to determine ; probably because, though both are so radically different, they are the work of artists who were fond of colour and knew how to use it effectively. Each has its own differing beauty, as an Irish round tower may have its, though such be contained in the grey limestone and white mortar. I am not referring to architectural shapes at all now, simply to colour of material ; and furthermore, rather to colour in itself as an architectural beauty, though this is not always depending on inherent colour of material. In Italy one often sees plastered buildings on the hillside, crudely washed and striped all over in reds and blues and yellows. It sometimes shocks, but the sunlight seems to pardon it—where there is no sham. But in a northern city street a building may well have colour wisely applied, not all over,

but in certain places. A modelled frieze, or a lunette over a door, or a panel, or a shrine upon the corner of an alley—these may give charm and colour to a city. There is really more need of coloured sculpture outside our city churches than there is inside. And in a country church if the work be executed by an artist, and not by a tradesman, added colour is an excellent thing both outside and in. Nothing can be finer in itself than a grey or white porch, or gable, with a proportionate space for fresco or mosaic, or something similar in effect. Witness some existing exteriors in Florence, just for example, among the smaller churches and the old city gates. And if the artificial colour but only last time only improves, by its weathering, the framing of natural material.

Inside any Irish building, colour can be made to last. If an altar be decorated with a painting in oil, or if the wall of the church itself be so decorated, there is no reason why it should not last for ages. But it must be rationally cared for in damp localities of course. Walls must be properly prepared, and canvas, if used, backed with zinc or something equally damp proof. The French seem to do these things very well. In the first part of this article I said, “Keims’ process of water-glass painting, or mosaic, or opus-sectile, would be more fitting in a church where the locality is unusually damp.” Such a statement may be modified justly, by adding that even mosaic is not permanent, and oil painting itself may be made to out-last mosaic of some kinds.

Both need executing with knowledge and extreme care for the future. Churches should not be decorated for our period alone ; we live in the present, but not for the present alone.

From the point of view of decorative beauty, interior colour is the one thing more abused than anything else, even sculpture itself, and that is putting it very gently. It is a fact that it takes some little time to discover how bad sculptured detail may be, while we can form an immediate estimate of the effect of colour in a building the moment we pass the portal. One cannot find many to defend the Pro-Cathedral interior, but there are worse and more defenceless interiors than that. When, in a future article maybe, I come to decorative work in colour, I may refer to examples. For the present let it be insisted that an interior, if left as the architect and sculptor leave it, might be more beautiful than it could well be after passing through the house painters' hands. Not that the house painter and decorator is not a necessary man sometimes, but he should not be allowed to design a scheme of colour, nor carry out details where the skill of an artist who can really draw and paint is absolutely necessary. There are hundreds of public-houses for the house painter to experiment upon ; let us at least retain the church for the artist, despite the recommendations of architects, who love everything from stencils to wall papers and lincrusta walton. And the proper painting of a saint, or an emblem, or of a subject, such as the Passion or a

Martyrdom, may be often more fitly relieved by a surrounding blank wall than by stencilled fleurs-de-lis, or stars, or vine tendrils; especially if the architect has introduced subdued features which space out the wall, or apse, or whatever it may be. For this holds good always, that the unadorned is foil for the adorned; the simple for the rich; the bare arm for the bracelet; the mass of black hair for the one carnation; the page of script for the one polychromatic initial. It is true that profusion itself, if carried out by one who is an artist, may please lovers of a certain order of beauty, but it will be a beauty without the grace of reticence or the saving salt of architectural silence. So much for coloured decorative work, just here, allied to architecture; the subject of itself is important enough for a separate essay.

Architecture and Architects, good readers and friends! We do not, indeed, want for architects, but we want men with convictions about art in this country, and also men who are artists themselves. The average jobbing architect, even if he can append some five or ten letters of the alphabet after his name, may yet have no convictions on art, and he may not be, nay seldom is, an artist or he would not be a jobbing architect. He would probably be in the workhouse; and preferably. But like the pot-boiling painter who will paint you a landscape, or a portrait, in any "style" you please (or what he considers that style), your pot-boiling, jobbing architect will "design" you anything you

please, and of any style you please—so-called Grecian, Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic Renaissance, Queen Anne, Victorian, or any other style or period, with all that is essentially beautiful in any of those periods left out. It will be an easy matter for a developing country to contain, or even import, men of this type; men who can pass a few professional examinations, and put on a borrowed cuticle of superficial “art.” But if commercialism in art of all kinds ever go down (though it will never disappear), something better may arise in part to replace it; something that comes from men with convictions; something from men who have thoughts to speak in their art; thoughts that may have been spoken before in every language, yet now prompting words that shall carry forward the spontaneity of ideas which may come with freedom dearly won, and with self-sacrifice sempiternal.

Architecture should carry her head as befits the daughter of a queen. This is not the place to state or re-state the rights of the others to whom a benign mother also gave birth, but they all have their rights and privileges from her, the mother of beautiful desires. But for Architecture, whom another and greater mother adopted, and made her own, for Architecture, the art of the “master builder,” I have stated a few age-lengthening privileges, one of which is common to all the other arts. The Church is the greater mother, greater than life, the mother of all human desires, for earthly life may cease and the

other is undying, and the beauty that is common to all her children that she has adopted is undying also. Beauty is the privilege—the prerogative of all the arts, and where there is beauty we may not condemn, for it is of goodness itself. Art for art's sake has no well-defined meaning, but to create something beautiful for beauty's sake alone, will show in the creating whether it be of goodness or not.

## ON ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.—A NOTE.

IN the *Irish Rosary*\* the writer said (on the matter of modern Irish churches)—“ Many small churches are ‘ designed ’ and built of late as a row of suburban villas are designed and built, or, at least, in a somewhat similar manner. The designs are stock for any architect, and he chooses his stock, and shuffles it a little. Just as in altar ‘ designing ’ whoever does that business seems to have an adjustable pattern that can be divided, expanded, or contracted to fill any space.” It is true that the so-called “ Gothic ” churches were more in my mind than any other class of religious buildings when I wrote those words, but it is generally true of the modern Catholic “ classic ” churches in Ireland. When a writer says that “ in northern climes the Greek art is a transplant, and has never lost its character of alien and stranger,” he states both a truth and an untruth, that is, a half-truth.† For the beautiful soaring old Gothic was itself a development of the elder horizontal Greek. Now the Greek arts, whether that of sculpture, or of architecture, or of pottery, can never be studied too closely by the artist, simply because their best period of art was perfect as art can well be, and these perfect arts (like perfect

\* July 1903.

† See article by “ Fidus ” in *Leader*, 17th October, 1903.



drama) belong to the world now for the world's use. Not because the Greek was thinking of the foreign world—though one could find evidence that sometimes he was—but his laws of art are the world-wide laws of art. The Byzantines brought some of those laws to ancient Ireland. But the comparatively modern rootless transplanting of a more southern and pagan exotic in the unsympathetic Christian soil of this northern land is another matter. The fine Gothic cathedrals of northern Europe, not grimly “savage” at all, but light, tender and gracile, these were yet a development of the severe early Greek temples, as those were, in turn, of the earlier Egyptian, and they of the trabeated wooden building. The Gothic cathedral builders could never have pierced the clouds with airy tower or spire, were not the Romanesque development behind them, as the Roman proper and the Greek proper were behind that. And the Gothic reached perfection as the Greek did, and then came a retrogression and a merging, and St. Paul's, at London, may fairly typify the best of the result. Then, shortly afterward, followed a rootless transplanting, and, in the nineteenth century the eclecticism from the final stages of Gothic art, as from everything else.

But in Ireland, owing to the peculiar disabilities of Catholics, who always formed the preponderate part of the population, hardly any churches were built from the Reformation until the Catholic Relief Bill became law. When at length a partial, or what may be termed a governmental release came, they

did not begin to select here and there from their own ruined past, or to develop primary forms, they did this (and they were not to blame under such conditions), they hurriedly transplanted whole edifices, cheapened to their poverty, either directly from Greece or Rome or from Puginized Catholic or Ritualistic England. Now, Italy contains the stem of every modern architectural form, but she found the seed in Greece; and England abounds, more, perhaps, than any other country in Europe, with old cathedral churches shewing the very best of every phase of the mediæval periods. Yet these branches are from the Italian stem. Ireland, at her day of partial freedom found—if she ever looked—but few examples of native form to select from as a basis of development, and she took to foreign and ready-made architectural forms like a passive child to soothing syrup.

But this architectural soothing syrup will not soothe her long, if her ecclesiastical art gets a bitter dose of corrective medicine. It certainly might not have been worse had she spread Cormac's chapels all over the land instead of what we now see, yet she might tire in time of an unlimited bedding out, even of a fine flower. Sooner or later she will be brought face to face with the realities of primary art. She will understand, among other things, that what made Greek art so perfect, and that what made her own development of Roman or Byzantine forms so interesting, had nothing to do with cogwheels. Greek art holds secrets; Roman or

Romanesque also ; so-called Gothic also, even as the primal Egyptian does. The secrets are not those of the mathematician or of the engineer with his ovolo parabolas and entasis in millimetres ; they were secrets before that, before the “ order ” and geometrical man came with his modern table-book. The Irish artist may refind them, but Ireland will probably have to suffer a little longer until he does.

Well, nothing prevented Greek art from reaching perfection. She had her foreign wars and internal broils and factions, and poets and philosophers of diametrically opposite opinions, but she had artists who could form ideas, and also transplant, with good sound roots, the ideas of others. Not the barren facts, mind, but the ideas. “ Ideas spring eternally the same, wherever man may be—they come, those ideas, from a primal source ; comparison and interchange of ideas modify but never obliterate. But ideas are strong in some, or weak to the point of insignificance in others.” The national legislative idea in Ireland is a strong one, the artistic idea (for all men may say) is not at present a strong one ; but it may become so, as it did once in Catholic Lombardy, Venice or Tuscany. Who can say it shall not ? As it did once in Ireland. Yes, it may have been so once and a long time ago, but no flattery will hide the truth that in the architectural arts there is hardly an idea in the country to-day. No newspaper puffery will make your parish church other than it is, solid, respectable,

well ventilated, and nice and warm in winter. A church built around hot-water pipes. Earnest-minded Irishmen, who have had the opportunity of gaining some first hand knowledge of art should, wherever they find a receptive mind, while acknowledging the utilities, at the same time put into it some principles of sound art.

There should certainly be no transplanting of Greek or any other classic temples however beautiful they may be in their native places. Yet Cork and Edinburgh have their own distinctive beauties, even as London has its, despite their incongruous Greek and Roman temples, and these true ones are generally undiscovered by the comparison drawers. Nor should there be any transplanting of English "Gothic," nay, nor replanting of "Irish Romanesque" ready-made churches, though the Irish Romanesque is better got into an Irish architect's head than some "Gothic" I know of. But the fact is that the Greek ideas, and the old Italian ideas, and the Gothic ideas, added together make up a code of sempiternal laws of architectural beauty. Instances of those laws' violation, or of their obeying, may be rejected at will, but the laws remain for the terrestrial ever, and perhaps beyond for all we know. Those laws were not made by man, they are only discovered by man, almost become the laws of life to some men from earliest boyhood—and when it is so we have the true artist.

But your modern "stock" jobbing builder of Puginised churches has no innate ideas, or feeling

for the finer of those laws suggested ; seemingly has not borrowed any ideas of worth from anywhere, Greece, or Italy, or mediæval England. He has just borrowed and transplanted certain facts, that part of the architectural plant above ground (so to say).

And there you have the whole affair of Irish ecclesiastical architecture in the cap of a leprechaun—rootless transplantation. As unthinking children make toy gardens with cut plants, so with this rootless architectural transplantation is there nothing to grow, and the erstwhile jaunty plants will fade, sicken and die. Yes, despite the most scientific of patent composts such a plant will die, and it cannot die too soon. Then let all Irish friends of good art help in preparing the ground for a plant with young fresh roots, striking sure, that it may strengthen and spring upward hereafter into a mighty tree.

## ON DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.

AMONG much else that was neglected perforce in Ireland during the Januform nineteenth century was the art of building fine houses. A country that has been rapidly shedding its people like a tree its leaves at the first cold blasts of autumn is hardly a country in which to expect building operations of any kind ; yet, whilst half her people have been setting their faces in one direction the other half have been setting them in another. Half Ireland has fled from her own shores, yet half has attempted to look inward upon herself and to beautify herself. Many churches and public buildings have indeed arisen ; some passable, many that are architecturally unworthy ; hardly any unsurpassable ; nay, perhaps not one. Those of her people who remained, faces turned upon herself, attempted the noble, yet, in a certain sense, the impossible. The steeple does *not* “ lie,” as somebody maliciously has said it does ; it tells a fundamental truth and, by intention, a beautiful, indestructible one. Art must arise, out of poverty or out of riches, or a people die ; art must crown religion, or religion weakens among a people who rightly crave for art of some kind.

Ireland did her best, and, though it may have been a very third-rate best, all honour be hers that she did no worse. Her faults, in ecclesiastical art, were the deadly sins of those who, in great part,

made her what she was in that late nineteenth century of steeples. She attempted the impossible, but she unselfishly, nobly, righteously, attempted it. And, strangely enough, in *architecture*, she never felt that she had been robbed of her inheritance of culture, or blamed her robbers, so pleased was she with her own earnest endeavours to do, something—anything at all—for her beloved Church.

Consequently, by reason chiefly of her ecclesiastical buildings, certain native architects have in some measure flourished, and a list of those resident in Ireland will shew an inquirer that in proportion to its urban population Irish architects in practice are fairly numerous. But they have, as yet, done little to beautify either metropolitan city or country town with irreproachable dwelling-houses. For, along with emigration from the country there has been some decided immigration into the cities, and these have enlarged themselves. These cities will probably go on enlarging themselves, and it is possible, with the half-promised improvement in general culture, that this century may not be so disastrously inartistic in its dwelling-houses as the last was in its churches. But it does not necessarily follow that, with a national university, though it ranked in the world far above Oxford or Paris, or with an architectural institute that might rank in its degrees with colleges of science and such like mills, that the art of the dwelling-house (in a country containing such an hypothetical university) would be greatly improved. For, always, one must reckon

with the architect, and he is an uncertain quantity. Some of the ugliest of dwellings have been evolved from the brains of architectural men with many letters after their names.

So far, in the bulk, our villas and suburban residences in Ireland of modern growth illustrate expediency, *cheapness* (as do the churches, despite the dicta of people who talk about extravagance), and profit, either for the architect, or the contractor more truly; or for their patrons. But they seldom or never illustrate any care of beauty through the subjection of profit and expediency to art. Now, to make the architect the scapegoat might seem unjust when the jerry builder himself is the dictator, or when the "developing" leaseholder of ground is the delinquent. The architect, who may really desire to beautify a suburb, may respond that he is bound by all kinds of vexatious conditions; and one of them is certainly money. Yet, in a cheap house, as in a cheap church, money can be wasted. It certainly is wasted on unnecessary "ornament," when it might be more wisely expended on solid essentials that make ornament of themselves.

But it is something other than a question of money, especially when a house is to be erected by the owner himself, and in which he intends to live. It is primarily a question of design; an important matter touching the ability of the architect to design a building after feeling the beauty of certain structural forms, however simple they may be. Ability, also, to show his patron wherein such



beauty lies, if the patron cannot see it himself. Money spent on building private houses is a force for evil when it is squandered on the unnecessary, however rich the patron may be ; just as much as when the unfeeling speculator converts an innocent suburban meadow into a terrace of bay-windowed eternity ; or when he pulls down a fine old gray-walled mansion, with its interesting irregularities, historical indications of growth, and supplants it, not with interchangeable beauties, but with multiplicative sets of six boxes and a bath-room under a roof scorning parapet. Increase of urban population is a poor excuse for vandalism.

A beautiful villa need have cost no more than an ugly one, though it should have cost enough to be well builded. But every villa must be thoughtfully designed. The money that is often wasted on unnecessary "ornament," both internally and externally, could have been better spent on the structural parts themselves. Perhaps some of my readers know the southern counties of England, say, for example, the County of Sussex, where there are fine old dwelling houses, some of them hundreds of years old ; many of them at least three hundred. Solidity is their chief charm, their satisfying beauty ; nay, those parts which suggest their constructive solidity are ornaments themselves, even when undecorated. And when these parts are decorated their decoration seems unquestionably appropriate. When these dwellings (like many more in Hampshire, for further example), were erected, there were no

speculative builders, and very few architects, in the modern sense of the term. The country mason, the country joiner and carpenter were employed by the owner to build a house suitable to his wants, and out of these very wants beauty somehow grew. The other day I came across an essay by Patmore about one of these Sussex dwellings, among other architectural matter, and I shall not apologize for introducing a long quotation from it, as I think it explains what I mean about these structural parts of a dwelling house. As to the materials employed, that is quite another matter; and whether they might be of native limestone, Castlewellan granite, Portmarnock brick, or of timber, the point of the quotation remains the same—structural parts used as beautiful adornments themselves. The quotation is from an essay which originally appeared, years ago, in the *St. James' Gazette*, and the writer has been just approving of a “modest *ostentation* of extreme substantiality.” Wrote Coventry Patmore : “This indeed is the properly architectural or artistic element. A house will look respectable, and something more than respectable, which has only the reality of being built somewhat better than well. But consciousness is the life of art, and there must be a quiet rejoicing in strength, solidity, and permanence, to give these characters that power over the imagination which a work of art must have. A labourer's cottage, or the smallest village church, which has this character is an artistic and rightly architectural work; and the nobleman's mansion or

the cathedral, which wants it, is not." He then refers to the decoration of certain supporting parts, and how such declare "with what ease and pleasure the burthen is borne upon their sturdy shoulders." Then comes his description of the village inn at Aldfriston, and I give this in full :—" . . . Its hostelry—no bigger than a well-to-do bailiff's cottage, showing no Elizabethan 'variety' in its ground-plan, and the front to the street having but three windows above and one on either side of the doorway. Coming upon it, quite unprepared for seeing anything particular in the village, this house fairly took my breath away by its exemplification of the way in which ideal and material greatness differ. It was like coming, in a newspaper article, upon three or four lines of great and unknown poetry. Yet it was nothing but a cottage built mightily, and with a mighty consciousness of being so built. It seems never to have been touched, except here and there by the house-painter, since the date at which it was raised, which was probably in the fifteenth century, the carved foliage in the spandrels of the small-arched doorway indicating that period. An architect learned in mouldings might, perhaps, fix the date to within twenty-five years, from those of the cornice."—(Some of our Antiquarian date-fixers would settle it to a day).—"The bedroom story projects considerably over the ground floor, and is borne by great oak brackets, the faces of which are adorned with painted carvings of figures in mitres, one being St. Hubert, as is shown by the stag at his

feet. The spaces between these brackets are ceiled with a great plaster 'Cavetto,' which, together with the brackets, springs from a wide timber cornice above the door and windows of the ground floor. In the hollow of this cornice are four or five grotesque faces, the painting of which, though fresh, seems, like the painting of all the other decorations, to be nothing but the original colouring faithfully transmitted. The three windows of the upper floor are bays, and are carried by great spread brackets carved and painted with most curiously quaint and simple representations of St. George and the Dragon, and symbols of his tradition, the tails of two dragons in the central bracket running in their extremities into the outlines of a pointed and foliated arch. The roof is covered in with slabs of ragged stone, thick enough for a London pavement."—(Numbers of the smaller dwellings about Petworth and Amberley have flagged roofs, and very beautiful roofs they are, when green and gray with age.)\*—"The dimensions of the timbers of the roof are proved inferentially by the fact that the roof-tree has not sagged an inch under some four hundred years of this burthen; and their mass and power are expressed artistically by their termination in a cornice of immense depth, and consisting of a greater number of moulded 'members' than I

\*When will Miltown-Malbay flags be used for Irish roofs? But where is the Irish oak to support them;—"your Irish wood 'gainst cobwebs," as *Mammon* calls it in Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*? Wicklow oak was used for roofing Westminster Abbey (it is said) because it was proof "against cobwebs."

remember to have seen in any other feature of the kind. The walls are plastered in their plain spaces, but indicate their construction of solid oak—which by the way, is far more durable than either brick or any ordinary stone—by the chance appearance in one place of a strange animal which runs up the face of the wall, and is obviously carved out of a beam otherwise hid by the plaster. There is nothing heavy in the total effect of this extraordinary piece of cottage architecture ; for there is artistic animation everywhere, and the expression of its strength is that of living power and not mere passive sufficiency.” We may be sure such a house then cost its owner a fair round sum to build, but he was thinking of his duty as well as of himself, and one’s duty surely is to make others glad in what brings joy to oneself. Patmore concludes his essay by saying :—“ To build such a cottage now might cost about three times as much as it does to build a common country inn of the same dimensions. It would not, of course, suit a London citizen so well as a Chiselhurst villa of like size and cost ; but it would be a fit abode for a duke in difficulties. . .”

Now, the principles that underly such architecture are of no particular country or period, yet a beautiful modern house, large or small, in city or township, is difficult to find in Ireland. There are some, not altogether beyond reproach, but by *contrast* with their neighbours, cheaply meritorious to their designers. In this article I put all consideration of public buildings, such as banks and

insurance offices, aside—I am dealing with the smaller dwelling (domestic) entirely ; and it may be fit to enunciate certain laws so that the reader may judge himself of what has been built in his own locality. If he do not live on the outskirts of some such city as Dublin, Belfast, or Cork, he probably has few or no modern dwellings to look at, though he may have a number of ruins of cottages built chiefly before the middle of the last century, in ante-exodus days. Well, these laws of the dwelling house may be put as follows :—(1) The particular wants of its inhabitants must be accommodated ; (2) The house must be dry and warm in winter, and as cool as may be possible in summer, for this is a general want ; (3) It must be perfect in sanitation when built in, or hard by, a city ; (4) It must be built to last more than a lifetime. There are no other laws, that one can discover, for artist or patron. The particular wants of the inhabitants in Ireland are surely discoverable when sought for ; a dry and warm house is not impossible, however scarce architects have made them ; and perfection in *drainage* is quite as easy as more healthful rural imperfection ; so these laws can be very easily submitted to ; all except the last. Nobody seems to care what may happen to anything after he has shuffled off his mortal coil. Some of the particular wants were referred to in an article in *The Leader* last September. (1903.)

“ But supposing these particular wants of a people are supplied by a sympathetic architect, and

that the other matters are adjusted, can we still have small ugly houses ? ” Hardly, I venture to say ; just possibly, but, at least, more rarely. When the country mason built a house for a farmer, and when he had not any new “ villas ” near him to lead him astray, he usually built a picturesque house. Of course, in larger houses, say of ten or twelve rooms, the difficulties increase, and the architect becomes more necessary. He has certain rules of proportion, and masses, and grouping, and so forth, but if these rules alone are faithfully adhered to, it still does not follow that a combination of them will approximate to a beautiful result. There is, indeed, something in art which defies all cut and dry formulæ. The designer must be an artist, he must, by the art within him (being without the sufficient impulse of the local mason to just build around wants, themselves half-divine), he must design by his art what other men have only partly felt in the doing, carrying this understood feeling forward to greater efforts, and to more sublime than the lowly conditioned could ever essay.

Effectiveness for good in art comes of right feeling. If Irish architects do not begin by feeling beauty of certain essentials, they will continue to go down further into the slough of commercial despond. In England there has been for years a brave upward struggle—perhaps to become, some day, a victory, were it not true that in all art there is no victory—but only a perpetual struggle. In Ireland, hardly one, certainly very few, among those who could,

have had the courage to raise a hand, or a voice, for artistic dwellings—for even a return to the vision of a hundred years ago when hope was yet unracked to lethargy.

Both general and particular wants? Why, good writer, what wants has Ireland that England or Scotland has not? The architect that does not understand, or wish to understand, the Irish mind, may ask, and take no answer as sufficient. In England, in the year sixteen hundred, her people had certain domestic and architectural wants; they have not changed much since; they are beginning to re-discover that over there. I will quote Patmore again to illustrate what I mean:—"The half-timbered walls belong only to times and places in which bricks and tiles are not to be had, and in which abundance of the best oak timber is. But hooded gables, deep cornices, bracketed bays, weather tiled walls, the projection of upper over lower storeys, and almost all the other charming features of the mode, have sound reasons of use which hold good now as they did in the year 1600," which means that beauty has sound reasons always and everywhere, and these rest on indestructible wants. The principles of constructive beauty are the same everywhere.

A country has other things than particular wants, it has its own particular supplies. These should characterise all good work. A country may supply (or it might supply) timber either for building or burning on the hearth; clay for brick chimneys



above grates for anthracite coal; or limestone for wide hearths over the turf fire; slate for roofing, or slabs of stones; whatever the material the surrounding country may supply, there it will be found suitable for the purpose of supplying the wants of its people. Not infallibly so, indeed, for there are districts where hardly anything is supplied by nature, unless it be fresh air. But in such places the people probably have but one want, and that is to be somewhere else.

Let us consider chimneys. They are of very great importance in a country like Ireland, that is damp and drear for many months of the twelve. In renaissance, and in all especially more or less flat-roofed buildings, which we find associated with climates where the sun is a constant factor (and not an hypothetical one), the domestic chimney or the smoke shaft is unnecessary. A few inches of iron pipe in an obscure corner of the roof is sufficient vent for the kitchen charcoal fire. But from the cottage to mansion, in all good northern domestic architecture, the first great feature to attract the eye is the chimney, and it should, at least from a distance, "delight it longest," as Patmore puts it. Chimneys, long ago, were ornamental by position as well as ornamental by shape and adornment. They were made much of, for they were recognised as necessities, just as roast beef and mince-pies were by the Englishman who built smoke-flues for no imperial-hand-across-the-seas reason that I have been able to discover. The climate, not the race,

made them necessities of life. Chimneys, therefore, in the days of thoughtful domestic architecture, were things of beauty. Now, just consider that the ages have also brought about the necessity of the factory chimney—it may be unfortunate, sometimes, I think, disastrous—but the necessity has come. But behold, no longer does beauty take the necessary in charge, no longer does she overrule, she seems to have fled at the first shaft, and never returned ; though judging by what one hears about the mighty spirit of modern commerce and its power for progress, one might reasonably have expected it to have evolved a different order of commercial campanile.

Yet a chimney for either factory or small dwelling may easily be beautiful if the average architect but have nothing to do with its construction.\* In the country one often sees a local mason's work projecting above a wide thatch, simply and severely square. That is preferable to a stock terra cotta one, especially one of those " ornamental " hexagonal ones with a superior glaze. The shape of the chimney stack is the great thing, and its position with regard to the mass of the dwelling. Next to that is the material itself, its colour, and the method of use. Chimneys should, as a rule, in this climate, be in the middle of the house, if the house be of moderate dimensions, and whether detached or attached.

\* There is quite a beautiful old gray chimney in the city of Galway, close by the river. The factory, or mill, or whatever it was—to which it is attached—is now silent. No architect, I feel assured, designed the shaft, and no parabola would fit its curves, I think.

Building them so might cost more money of course—but the total cost of the house might come to but very little, or no more, than at present. It could be saved on the avoidance of showy cast iron and enamelled slate fire places, and on interior plaster work, and sham “pointing” of brickwork. But as a speculative business architecture hardly concerns me, and if, in a row of houses, chimneys must be paired together, at least in detached ones, of the better kind, there is little or no motive for imitating their position.

Then let us consider windows. As we approach a villa, or a farm house, next to the general form of the house with its chimney stack, we become interested in the shapes and distribution of its windows. If it be a house of many windows one may often tell at the first glance whether the inside has dictated to the outside, or whether the dictation has been from outward inward. Though windows are made for the *inletting* of air and light, yet are they in appearance certain *outlets* of the spirit reigning within. Now, I do not wish to draw a close analogy between the soul of a man and the interior of a house, but for the purpose of pointing more sharply what I mean when I say that in architecture the hidden, the purposeful, should shape the expressed and the visible (as it well may in other crafts) for this, the soul, through the life of daily action, may serve as a rough analogy at least; and, in other ways, it often does. For the well defined, or even the speculative wants

of the builder of a house, if the design is for *himself*, will shape his domicile, just as the soul with its own special characteristics will give expression through the life of the body. So that if we honestly know a man's outward life of free action (not the seeming one, either of scandal or of puffery) we can fairly estimate the desires of his spirit; and so can we say of a well-designed house that there, behind that window, there must be a kitchen of such and such a size and condition; up there, a bedroom of such a height; over there, a parlour of such a shape. We may say of a well, or of an ill-designed action, there is a great soul behind that, or a narrow mean one behind this. Again, as a good man's soul has various aspects, some rare, others commonplace and even sordid, so may a good house express itself meanly in some of its outlets.

The windows of many houses indicate nothing but the desire for a certain amount of light. Now, light can be as easily obtained through low broad windows as through higher and proportionately narrower ones. The ceiling reflects light about a room, and a ceiling eight feet high and with windows close up under it, were they but three feet in depth, and carried along the greater width of the room, would light the room effectually. Not that I am suggesting three feet for the depth of any window, but I am suggesting in chambers that depth is of less importance than breadth, both in the scale of beautiful repose as well as

in that of utility. If a low, broad south window be built out in a bay it may also receive the sunlight from three-quarters of the sun's course in our cool spring time and chilly autumn, and from the whole of his course (whenever he shines) in winter. In summer (when we have such a season) thin curtains can be drawn across the panes, but it is usually *more* sunlight that is wanted, not less, and broad windows bring in more than high narrow ones. But a high window and a lofty ceiling is neither healthy nor comfortable, nor beautiful in a small domestic dwelling. If it be extended across the wall like the low broad one, then we have a vast acreage of glass that makes a room very cold in winter, and in summer as insupportable to live in as a greenhouse. Lofty rooms, of course, usually dictate lofty windows, and some people imagine that such rooms are healthy because they are lofty. A few hundred cubic feet of stagnant air above the head is not particularly conducive to comfort or health, and some lofty rooms that I have sat in, always seemed both foul and cold in winter. One may sit and read on a window settle below broad, small-paned, lights, which open above one's head, close up under the ceiling, sit there and enjoy the sunshine and inhale the purest of air, free from the draught which sweeps the upper part of the room; and, it might be added, which keeps the ceiling free from cobwebs, that are sometimes allowed to collect on certain dark, lofty, and eminently

respectable ceilings one may find in Suburbia Hibernica.

No comfort comes of a certain ostentation, and lofty rooms in small houses are the very essence of a certain ostentation. Certainly, from the outside of the dwelling, effective proportion or beauty rarely springs from ostentation at all, unless it be an art-directed ostentation of the necessary. But whether there be lofty rooms inside a house, or low ceiled ones, let the windows at least emphasize the height and size of them, and as near as possible the shape. When one considers the ugly-coloured, sham-pointed walls, pierced with rows of uniform shaped and sized windows which indicate and illustrate nothing of the interior at all, that are so often seen in the larger suburban houses, one is forced to conclude that the architects or house-builders themselves, are lost to all sense of fitness, endeavour, and beauty whatsoever, and, knowing their public only too well, flatter it with a few interior unnecessary respectabilities to keep it in countenance.

Then may we next consider external doorways and porches, for these are almost as important as windows. Yet before dismissing the subject of windows, altogether, and remembering that external conditions somewhat affect the form of all things, even man, it may be fit to point out that the dripstone over an opening, hardly known in southern climates, is very necessary in northern ones. It is what is termed a "Gothic" feature.

Whatever it may be termed, it is an excellent feature, and whatever its shape may be, provided it be a beautiful shape. As a matter of fact the less "gothic" in shape the opening may be (that is to say the less pointed) the more necessary becomes the dripstone, or hood-moulding, or projection, to throw off the rain water. It is as necessary to a window facing the south west, or north west, in this country, as a brim to a hat, or as a cape to a cloak before umbrellas were imported. Above a door or a closed porch (to which I am now coming) a dripstone enlarged to a hood is a blessing to a waiting visitor, either on a wet or on a hot summer's day. In this case, of course, it becomes a shelter, just like a wide eave above a bedroom window, which permits of an open casement in the rainiest of weathers.

About porches and external entries, one may notice an occasional apology for such details here and there in suburban houses. Often they are very uninteresting things altogether. One would not care to sit in one of them even were it provided with an inviting settle, which is seldom the case. Sometimes the builder seems to have had a struggle with his conscience, whether it would be setting a better example to his neighbouring builders to hang his front door level with the front wall, or to set the door jambs back into the narrow hall. To construct a simple porch seems to trouble him nothing. If he be first on the field—if he be the pioneer, or the buccaneer, or the Pizarro of some

innocent suburb, his example will be quickly imitated. So it is usually the case (when his conscience decides on a porch) that the small end of a "hall" is cut off from it, thereby reducing the hall proper in size, and, like the end of a roly-poly pudding, it is the most uninteresting part of the arrangement. That is, unless it be the other end at the back kitchen door, with the coal hole under the stairs.

Now, a door-porch (if it be necessary at all) should be as well and as thoughtfully designed as any other feature. It should be large enough to shelter more than one waiting visitor at a time, and it should provide them with a seat on which to rest if they feel disposed. If it be a sociable kind of porch it will have perhaps, two long settles, for an evening lounge in summer time and for mutual discourse. In rainy weather, otherwise mild, the need of a roomy porch, or of a verandah, is often felt by suburban residents. In the larger residences, extended verandahs opening off a hall or parlour ought to be added for this purpose, for sociability and an airing of oneself, even though the rain be falling. Rain falling on the flowers and shrubs in summer time is (unless daily persistent), when one sits beneath a shelter, rather a pleasant, if ordinary, phenomena to watch. Anyway, in this country, where rain falls so often, shelters of this kind are needed. This may be the chief reason why they are seldom builded. Well, they might build themselves, in a way, if



the bedroom floor would be allowed to project a couple of feet or more on corbels or brackets, or even on columns. With warm, dry brick beneath one's feet, and a long, sloping bench, there might be as fine a verandah as could be desired. Porches may sometimes construct themselves concomitantly in this way, and have done so in some parts of England at least. A window is built out to give more floor space above, brackets issue forth at the sides underneath to carry the weight. Then a low wall is built on either side of the raised flagging in front of the door to prevent a stumble. A seat is added, and sweet briar and jasmine and honey-suckle often follow as a natural, if not as an inevitable, result.

Yes, there can be little doubt that an outside porch indicates an interior want, as well as it indicates the influence of external conditions. And the more that a porch, window, roof, door, gable, everything domiciliar, indicates with modesty its purpose the better the foundation for art to decorate, or shape becomingly.

To further strain analogy between the spirit of a man and the interior conditions of a house, moulding (however elusively to some eyes) their exteriors, I might choose an example in the secret chamber at Boscobel House, England (a typical secret chamber), where many a priest, and, more notably, King Charles II., was securely hidden. Now, a secret chamber always tried to hide itself; there is little doubt about that intention. Priest

hunting and priest proscribing had made such places imperative; just as unjust laws and social ostracism in other ways sometimes make men secret in their plans for their redression. Such a chamber was indeed rightly called a "priest's-hole," and this one (with others in the same house) had many a time hidden a priest from his blood-hungry pursuers. So its secrecy was its most important purpose, and its size was secondary and dependent. Now, as Mr. Penderell Brodhurst (a descendant of the faithful Penderells himself) has pointed out:—\* "The hiding places were not afterthoughts; the house was built to fit them, not they to fit the house." And again he says, "exterior views of the house . . . all show very clearly the extraordinary prominence of the great chimney in the thickness of which is the hiding-place wherein Charles II. slept. . . . One would have thought that . . . this great bulging chimney would have attracted immediate attention from those who were seeking the son of 'the man of Belial.'" Well we know it did not. We may suppose, the Puritans had no eyes for constructive beauties. Now, this was a very secret interior feature necessarily in connection with the *exterior* for escape of refugees. This "priest's hole" may bear analogy, if it bear any, with the most hidden seemingly of man's thoughts. Yet will man's constant, fixed, and

\* In an article in one of the modern English or American, magazines, but I have, since making this extract, forgotten which.

secret thought mould his exterior features, though there may be many men unable to see the indicative nature of the expression.

So much for spirito-material analogies which carry us such a very little way. Yet nothing on earth has so often been compared to a habitation as the body of man. It is a temple, a shrine, a roof, and a dwelling, and a house which contains the whole world. It certainly has a roof which covers a multitude of iniquities. The suburban villa is hardly equal to it in that respect, provided the man be out of doors. And that brings me to roofs in general.

The mass and shape of a roof, and its relation to other masses, are of the first consideration. Next to that is, perhaps, its colour. About its shape the climate dictates to the house. A fairly high pitch is a necessity, but it does not dictate which way the ridge shall run, or how near the ground an eave may come. The sky line of a city, or of a suburb, is a sensible factor in the making of a city's beauty. It is shamefully neglected in suburbs where a whole street is in course of erection. The commercial instinct here revels at will. General horizontality dominating certain features of verticality, subordinate and characteristic of the particular dwelling, were well enough; but we often have an horizontality about as interesting as a bare railway embankment (against the sky), with a plate-layers' box at every twenty feet. If every man could build

his own house in his own way and style to suit his own requirements, we should certainly have more picturesque suburban streets than the speculative builder gives us. We should have probably many an ugly house, but we should have an interesting sky line, without a doubt.

As for the colour of roofs, this is directly determined by the material employed, such as variously-coloured slate or tiles, or it may be thatch at a distance from cities. Corrugated iron is anathema ; but copper and zinc and lead are each useful for covering certain small features, and copper often weathers a beautiful colour.

Slate roofs can be made much more interesting than they usually are by a gradation of different sized slates in the same roof, and also by selecting, not uniform, but variously-tinted ones. Just as the beauty in a brick wall should be of the variety come of the burning of the clay, so may slate roofs have a beauty of variety in selection. Some of the greenish-coloured Irish slates make very fine roofs ; and mixed with gray and purple ones make an otherwise monotonous surface a charming bit of broken colour. Many of the old Galway and Kilkenny roofs, for instance, and a few of the Dublin ones in the back streets, are interesting solely on this account. Repairs ? Well, yes ; but accidentals suggest motives. Tiles also can be burned in various tints of red, and they can be made of various sizes and shapes, of course. As much art can be shown in the covering over

of the rafters of the roof as in the treatment of a drawing-room ceiling. But it very seldom is. The architect colours the roof part of his elevation blue—and there's the end of *his* art, and the beginning of the journeyman slater's.

There is plenty of slate in Ireland, and of various colours, and fissile qualities; thick and greenish to thin and blue. Whether they are, on the whole, more spongy than the Welsh slates, I have not troubled to inquire. From out of the window (before which I am at present writing), I can see a row of very uninterestingly-shaped roofs, but there have been so many repairs done upon them, in both foreign and native slate, so much blending and gentle contrasting of sea green grays and purplish blues, with old and new red ridge tiles, that were the reader to see a faithful water-colour study of these roofs, he might be surprised to find how much beauty can be got, even unintentionally, by variety in the colour of roof materials.

About the rafters of the roof—this matter brings us inside the house, once they are covered up. We are now in an upper bedroom, and the man of a lath and plaster creed has had those inch-and-a-half rafters covered up inside, of course, and as soon as possible, for the paper-hanging familiar is waiting for his job. Now, were honest rafters used, with a decent space between, they might be shewn inside and made to serve a beautiful purpose. Four-inch rafters with a good drift separating them (and these are *slight* enough for an honest roof, supposing them

to be of the average depth) when exposed, and finished and oiled for preservation, are constructively beautiful. The room beneath them can be kept just as warm as if it were ceiled in plaster, provided the slates or tiles are fastened to deep battens above boards with felt between, leaving an air space. An attic thus roofed in, and with dormer windows, may be a cheerful change to a room beneath with a ceiling differently treated and a bay, or a flat window.

The interior walls of houses (of the smaller kind, particularly), should be also seriously considered. Generally they are finished off in plaster like the ceiling—the room is a white box with a deal-boarded floor—and the tenant choses something coloured in paper for the walls (at a limit of so much the piece, or dozen) and that is the beginning and end of interior decoration. If there be a juster example of the baneful effects of anglicisation in the ornamentation of the domicile than this spectacle of new tenants trooping in their dozens to the house decorators, and “choosing” their one-and-sixpenny parlour paper hangings, as they choose new materials for clothes, following the imported fashions of the foreigner, if there be another example more expressive of an apathetic sliding into an English mode of thought than this, I should be glad to know of it. To the ordinary “middle-class” mind it must be one of those acquired pleasures, or appetites, which depend for their force in their comparative rarity of indulgence. It cannot be compared with that supremest

of pleasures, driving a petrol engine on the public road to the risk of human life, but it is often associated with moon-shooting and other well-known sports and respectable pastimes.

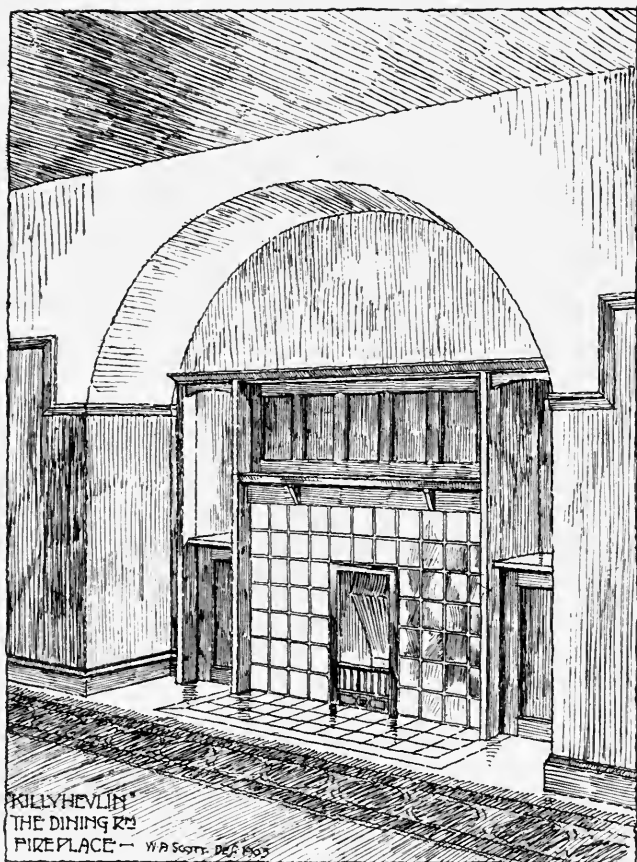
But even if a wall must be covered with plaster of paris, and machine printed paper for bicycle handles and chair backs to chafe away in patches, such wall-papers might be well designed. Indeed, in the artistic papering of walls, England herself is doing all that repentance for past enormities can do. And can Ireland do nothing? Is importation of England's cast-off fashions to go on indefinitely? For the writer's part he considers plastered and papered walls in kitchens, and halls, diningrooms, and vestibules or lobbies, an unnecessary "finish." Honest brick-work, carefully finished off, and wood-panelling, are more suitable for such places at least, and less expensive on the whole.

Fine flooring, also, is another point that the builder or the architect evades. Here, in Ireland, improved flooring means a greater expenditure of money, without doubt. In a modern villa it is left for the upholsterer to ornament (or domesticate) the floor. If the builder puts a few "fancy tiles" down in the vestibule he can pray in the public places and thank Heaven he is unlike other men who have omitted such meritorious concessions to the spirit of beauty. But it is left for linoleum and carpets to cover up and hide for a term, varying from one calendar month to three sidereal years, his other iniquities.

Fireplaces he often attempts to make as "ornamental" as his trade catalogue will allow. Now, a fireplace should be designed and built to suit the requirements, generally of the country, and particularly of the locality. A fire-place for a County Kilkenny domicile, where they get excellent anthracite coal, should be different in some of its features to a fire-place in Dublin, where sea-borne coal is easily obtained, or one in Kildare, or further west, where the best of all fuel, turf, abounds. In fact, in Dublin even turf can be got cheaply and abundantly, and it might become a flourishing trade had not shoneenism somehow put a kind of ban upon it. A dining-room fire-place, with a low hearth-stone and wide chimney canopy above, is a beautiful ornament to the room, and lends itself to sculpturesque treatment. The smoke of turf is pleasanter on the air of a town than coal smoke. Anyway, if it were blended with the latter in large proportions, we should have a greater variety of chimney odours about. At present the manure works odour has all the prestige of solitary and persistent protest.

An interesting fire-place (for a coal fire) accompanies this essay. In the same house there are other equally interesting fire-places, and what is generally termed an ingle nook in the hall. Not far from Dublin, I believe, there are examples of modern architectural attempts to dignify the domestic fire-place, but in general, the English trade catalogue "stock" is predominant.





KILLYHEVLIN—DININGROOM FIREPLACE.  
(By Wm. Scott, A.R.I.B.A.)

[To face page 126.]



I doubt if many of the readers of this essay know of the country house (recently erected for Mr. W. E. Hurst of Killyhevlin, Co. Fermanagh), by Mr. W. A. Scott, a sincere and painstaking architect, the designer of the projected church at Spiddal and of the O'Growney Memorial Tomb shortly to be erected at Maynooth.\* Well, the Killyhevlin house has so conspicuously escaped notice that this alone would be sufficient excuse for introducing an illustration, one view of it, into these pages. The Killyhevlin domicile shows in several particulars what I mean by simplicity in the treatment of certain necessary features, they still being so ornamentally arranged as to form ornamentation of themselves. With the usual type of suburban and country villa erected of late years in Ireland, men have become so accustomed to the unnecessary ornaments applied in the form of irritating vases and parapets where they are unneeded; of stock capitals to front door columns to cast iron; to "fancy terra cotta," and "ornamental bricks" let into dead walls, giving them a death in life which is more distressing than absolute annihilation; and are accustomed to find so many weak beggings of the architectural question everywhere; that a broad simplicity of treatment, with its reliance on shapes and masses—more than

\* The O'Growney Memorial Mausoleum, at Maynooth, is now completed, and contains the remains of the patriotic founder of the Gaelic League. The small Spiddal parish church is approaching completion as fast as careful building permits.

on trivial unnecessary adjuncts—for beauty, may be expected to offend, rather than to please.

Unless a modern designer can please his patron or prospective patron, it will go hard with him. A patron—or a patient rather—will trust in his physician, swallowing the most nauseous of drugs for years in order to recover from some malady. But then the patron—the patient I mean—is, of course, conscious of the malady. If an architect offer, instead of a nauseous drug, an invigorating draught, that is to say, a fine design, and pledge his reputation among artists that the patient (or patron) will discover one day after recovery how artlessly sick he really was before he took the draught, that architect would be laughed at. Any man, is he not an architect enough to know what kind of house pleases him most? Yet the kind of houses which please most men are the houses that the jerry builders have been erecting for them from a motive of profit, and profit alone, for the last fifty years or more! Unthinking people succumb to things about which they know little or nothing, preferring one pleasure that springs from a mental habit to all those that may come of mental resistances and a cultivated taste.

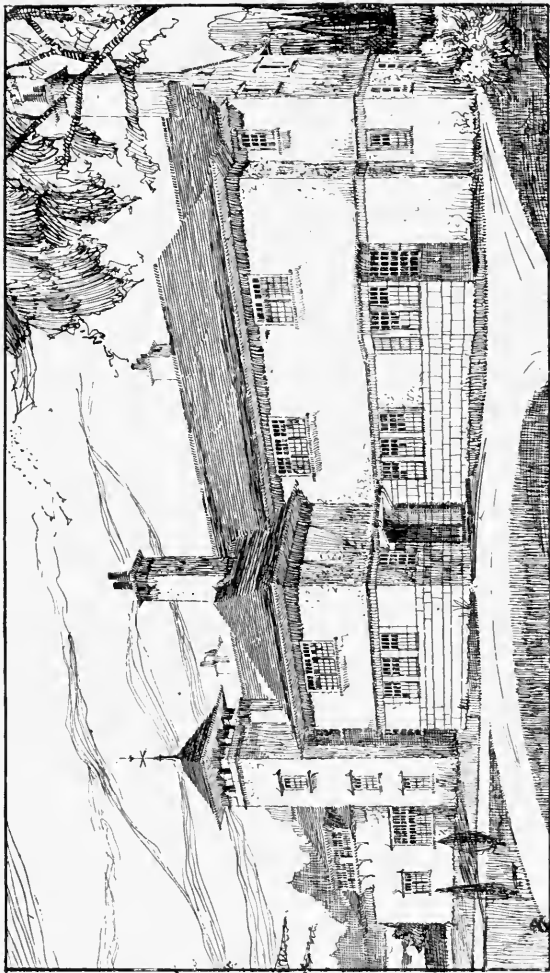
The simple and *ostensibly* unaffected (for all art is in a sense affectation, of course) has been attacked many a time within recent years. Among others one, Mr. Alexander Nisbet Paterson, M.A., A.R.I.B.A., attacked it a couple of years ago. He said, for instance :—“ When we come to analyse the

characteristics of the new movement ” (in England *i.e.*) “it is to this taboo of ‘the styles’ that they can all be traced. The refusal to employ the formulæ thus provided has its necessary result in the prevailing baldness, the absolute lack of variety and movement in this class of work, so that the same motive which has provided a cottage-gate must serve for the fitment in a drawing-room. When all the resources of the modern orchestra, so to speak, are contemptuously ignored, and Pan’s pipe—or its modern equivalent, the penny whistle—is held to be the only instrument worthy to be used by an artist, is it to be wondered at that the melody is monotonous and thin ? ” He also said that “a rough cast wall, *plus* a mosaic panel and a repoussé copper name-plate, is not the whole art of architecture.” That is something, of course, worth knowing, and every architect must feel grateful to Mr. Alexander Nisbet Paterson, M.A., A.R.I.B.A. Of course, this kind of criticism in England is healthy enough ; the “domestic ” artists there are many and influential ; here, in Ireland, as distinguished from church builders, they hardly exist at all. In England, the “nympholepts of the old styles,” as I believe they are termed, are an useful *drag* on the wheel, for there is often a tendency, in new movements, towards bolting down strange alleys on the part of some of the leaders themselves.

But this architect of Killyhevlin is not one of the bolting kind, and he has an eye for the beauty of mass, of line and of tone. Here, in this country

house, we see that colour, or light and shade in variety of tones (which is colour in a sculptor's sense, and indeed in any sense, if we think it out) we see it can be obtained by a thoughtful use of masses, as well as of material in their unquestionably right and proper place. And thereby it satisfies: nothing seems removable, or adjunctory, or superfluous. For whether certain features in a building be really (after analysis) superfluous in the absolute utilitarian scale, or not, if the architect has succeeded in making them appear necessary, however subordinate, they will, at least, please and satisfy by consent of the eye. This consent is based on the instant admission by the mind that the ostensible suggestion of necessity is, in appearance, a real necessity; and that is enough for peace and pleasure, if not for happiness, which, maybe, is a matter beyond art altogether.\*

\* If the whole of the interior of Killyhevlin House were illustrated here it would bear out more fully what I mean. As it is, there is but one detail shewn among a score just as interesting; and that is the dining-room fireplace. It is fit in referring to this exceptional Irish architect that I further indicate how carefully he studies every detail of his art, and how (restricted though he may be by a patron) he can, within those restrictions, serve art truly and well. And I purposely choose the smallest commission, that I know of his undertaking, to illustrate this care and service. An old house at the corner of a country street (Monaghan) was required by its owner to serve the purpose of both a butcher's shop and a dwelling house. The dwelling house was to remain intact, though Mr. Scott managed to add two or three dormer windows to the roof. A large arched doorway at the corner, and a window, were necessities, and some outside and inside tiling. There are architects in Ireland who would have put up a couple of cast iron pillars at the entrance, and a couple of girders to carry the over-structure, and then the usual shop window fittings we are familiar with everywhere. This



KILLYHEVILIN COFFERMACH FOR W E HURT ESQ. DESIGNED 1863 WAS BUILT 1864. HIS 7 HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOUR.





Just consider what might be if the Irish people unitedly shewed in their daily living how different they are to their neighbours, instead of currying favour with the "big brother" by illustrating solely their like feelings. If the "big brother" has a virtue in him, artistic or other, it might be worth adoption; but, when certain native thoughts clash with imported ideas (even as some of these here may be) they should be expressed in indubitable terms; not kept hidden within their bodily temples like that "priest's hole" in Boscobel House, to be outwardly discoverable only by the eyes of the initiate.

I have not referred in detail to those particular wants of the Irish people as distinguished from other races. Many of their wants are common to all races, but some are distinctive. I have, elsewhere, pointed out some of them, but Irish people

corner house was not without interest as it stood, and in Mr. Scott's hands its interest will be increased on its conversion into a shop. Were he allowed to alter the windows a picturesque front would undoubtedly be the result. However, as it will stand, it will not be another shocking example of a patron's insensibility to *all* that is beautiful, as such things often become in commercial hands. As I said, it is a little matter to refer to, but I prefer to choose examples from little things like this to prove that it is not always, nor even generally, large undertakings that show capacity for the production of satisfactory domestic art. But what is always needed, however, is a man with a strong sense of fitness, and with an artistic soul under all, besides being thoroughly grounded in the technical parts of his profession. And the writer knows, for that matter, that Mr. Scott has been trained for years in the best of technical schools—experience—after having been through the usual R.I.B.A., and other mills, in the ordinary academic way.

Having mentioned schools, it can be noted that, with all the modern art education, architectural design does not seem to be

themselves are the best judges of what they want, no doubt. Still, one who has lived many long years among them, and who is akin to them in most things but birth, may know just a little about them. Given capable Irish architects, springing from their own race and thinking with them,

a plant easily forced into flower. Very intelligent and carefully trained, and, probably, industrious students always fail more readily in design than in any other architectural subject. If the *published* results of the final examinations for the Associateship of the Royal Institute of British Architects (an institute to which several Irish Architects belong) be examined by anybody interested in figures, this seems to be proved. The writer is no believer in examinations, and detests figures represented by numerals, but the majority of architects, as well as other people he has known, believe in them, so he will quote the results for the last two years.

In the year 1902, there were 49 candidates, and only 20 passed. The following numbers will shew the failures in various subjects included in the examination. In Design, 23 ; in Mouldings and Ornament, 23 ; in Building materials, only 14 ; in Principles of Hygiene, 12 ; in Specifications, only 8. So in business matters, there are a greater number of passes than in the more artistic subjects. In the year 1903 there were also 49 candidates for the final examination. Of these only 22 passed. The failures were—in Design, 19, and in Ornament, 26 ; in Building materials, only 9 ; in Specifications, only 8 ; in Construction, 10 ; and in Sanitation, 13. So if figures can be made to prove anything, it follows that the coming generation of architects find design the least surmountable subject of all. It comes to this, maybe, that, as it is truly said, art cannot be taught anybody. An average young man can be taught rules of thumb about specifications, and strains and stresses, and drainage estimates, and if he forget them afterwards his table books will help him ; but he cannot be made to see beauty if he has not been granted a faculty of receptiveness which is beyond all instruction. He can, of course, repeat to order the beautiful thoughts of another, but that is not designing, and it would be almost a miracle if those beautiful thoughts were not mangled in such repetition (or attempted repetition). But anybody of a little intelligence could attempt as much with a T-square, and a scale, and a few measurements of the original. Yet, in Ireland, one might feel grateful for a few repetitions of the desirable, instead of those multiplications of the contemptible that have arisen around many of its cities.

despising no principle of beauty because it has exhibited itself in the land of the foreigner, fine domestic buildings may arise in the future. But never will I believe that the architecture of the cheap jerry-terrace-builder, is suited to their wants. For, if it is, then one of their chief wants is to become "genteel" British "dastards" as rapidly as possible.

## ON DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE— FURTHERMORE.

FROM a study of “artizans’ dwellings,” and labourers’ cottages, and eligible shops, and forty pound-a-year suburban terrace “villas,” worse than any, one might conclude that the trade of building consists of contracting separated from art and from everything else. The nineteenth century saw the evolution of the speculative builder. Builders of houses there were before, though it is not certain that beyond the shop of the city merchant or the hostelry of the innkeeper that the humbler folk of a town had dwellings erected specially for them until what we term later times ; that is, of course, “enlightened” times. People who had not been successful in life probably did always, whether at Rome, or at Paris, or London, or Dublin, as they, in part, do now,—occupy the abandoned dwellings of more successful predecessors. But in the country, at least, the peasant had his hovel more or less picturesque into which he shrank at nights, while his lord feasted across the valley with music that crept out between the gusts of winter wind. Art then, was in the palace and the castle, and, above all, in the Church, where it will always seemly be ; and the peasant received his share proportionately, being but a hewer of

wood, and a drawer (but seldom a drinker) of water alone.

But the proletariat have emerged—even the British created Irish proletariat have emerged, and want bath rooms. All want bath rooms as well as front parlours—dustmen, tram-conductors, grocers' assistants, and nicely-groomed bank-clerks. They are looking for suburban villas at twenty, thirty, and forty pounds a year. The speculative builder supplies them, and knowing all their weaknesses, being himself an heir of the ages, entitles the front gate jambs of the forty-pound ones by the castellar and palatial names of the past. If he is an artist at all, this jerry fellow, he is an artist at selecting grandiloquently. “Baronscourt” and “Normanton” are simply masterpieces of selective art for a forty-pound-a-year “villa residence” with a semi-circular light over the door for a stuffed pheasant or a plaster horse.

Art is not in these dwellings, nor, when the proletarian has risen high on the uncertain air-ship of destiny, and the shop assistant has ventured in bankrupt stocks and thriven in a shop of his own, and the bank clerk has curried favour and become at last an honest branch manager, all of them in villas at seventy or even a hundred pounds a year, or “bought-out” as their wives love to term it, do we then find art with building and contracting united. The speculative builder has been equal to this occasion. He has used better material, that is all. I write of such in general. Some of the

most beautiful modern buildings in the world, domestic buildings, and some of them that Europe has ever seen since the emergence of a so-called middle-class, have been built in England, the true home of jerry-builders, during the last twenty years. They have already been imitated on the continent, as well as their interior decorations. But in Ireland, the speculative builder, where houses are wanted (by leave of the emigration agent) is absolutely king of the castle. In England there is an architectural party in unflinching rebellion; in Ireland a stray rebel is like a fly in amber. He can't do much anyway, on account of his environment—I think that's the right word—but he can see right through it, being a live fly still.

The man who built, a hundred or more years ago, in Dublin, was probably an ascendancy man, and the aristocrat of taste was at his heels. The Georgian type was supreme. In this city of terraces this type of domicile has often an honest unadorned simplicity of its own, quite bearable and almost lovable. If a certain thing were done, which wants doing badly, some of these terraces would be almost irreproachable. If, for instance, in Merrion Square, and St. Stephen's Green, the fine old red-brick houses, often with stone below, situated there, had all the joints of the brickwork raked out clean and repointed in white mortar or cement—good honest, wide joints without any silly putty shams stuck on to flake away like a visible lie. That

would be a cheap improvement, and such houses are worth it. Your modern builder in the suburbs also is fond of "rubbed" brick, and he will imitate rubbed brick rather than miss his chances with that bank manager, or even with the bank clerk. But he usually leaves red or yellow brick alone as to colour. Who is answerable, but house owners themselves, for the disgusting practice of painting bricks red, with black or white false pointing, the writer does not know. But it is done, and shamelessly done.

Paint, good people, why do you paint good red brick, and why do you also paint good Irish limestone? And, again, why do you choose red brick, uniform in colour, and that when its very accidentals of burning are its beauty in building? And when somebody one of these days begins to use the native clay and makes tiles, remember that accidentals are delightful verities to the true artist who looks for them and uses them wisely. And don't let your architect, or your builder, have his way with you, if *you* are paying for the house.

If there was one good thing that lasted through the century in Irish domestic architecture, it was the dashing, or rough casting, of stone walls. In the country parts this was often excellently done. A "dashed" wall with small-paned windows is a beautiful thing; with a thatched roof and rarer dormer windows, with honey-suckle twining around a porch, and tall hollyhocks and lupins standing against the hedge, nothing, this side of an earthly

paradise has produced a more fitting place for the man who seeks no honour beyond that of his home.\* But even four white-washed walls and a thatched roof, nay, a slated roof, and a whole row of gray one-windowed cottages with a low wall enclosing a forecourt, is preferable to the ornamental suburban villa with its row of fancy blue bricks and serrated ridge tiles, or its "stock" octagonal and ornamental chimney-pot. For shapes and sizes may vary, and a house may be of any shape and size, provided the proportions of its parts and its colour in general be beautiful. But your speculative builder has made your whitewashed-cottage people of the suburbs behind "dashed" walls, and beneath thatch, feel uncomfortable. They want hall doors with glass panels, and front parlours with bay windows so that they can examine at leisure the antimacassars of the people next door. Then they will be happy with their three rooms and a scullery. And their daughters will probably want six rooms and a real bath room, and that speculative builder of "villas" who cares nothing about proportion or beauty, understands all this. The utmost he can aspire to (or the man who employs him or grants him

\* Mr. Wm. Scott has not forgotten the æsthetic value of a pergola for climbing roses, etc., in his designs for the *thatched* domiciles in the proposed Garden Village at Kilkenny (an enterprise originated by Captain the Hon. Otway Cuffe, an enthusiastic Gaelic Revivalist). These designs are the most charming modern things in small domestic architecture that I have seen in Ireland. Mr. Scott intends using not only thatch for the main roofs, but *Kilkenny flags* for roofing small abutments, for weathering buttresses and for window hoodings. See previous note on Malbay flags.



a lease) is to imitate suburban London, as he is now doing in the vicinity of Dublin. That is his goal ; to build semi-detacheds with ridge ornaments outside, and fancy tiled hearths with imitation marble mantelpieces inside. Well, are you going to allow him to spread suburban London all round Dublin, or are you going to advance one of your national characteristics—beautiful “rectilinear” houses with their gray dashed walls,—awaiting development ?

All over this land of the free, give us some honest walls, some honest timber beams, some honest tile, slate, brick or thatch of the country ; give us dwellings built by the local mason, if he be not yet extinct (like the Gobban Saor). The local mason never learnt about styles, he never went to any art school—give us him and his houses before those things cribbed out of, and patched together from, architectural design books for the multitude. My goodness, a nation that so hates the Saxon, that it should clutch at this vile make-believe of comfort, should long for an electric bell that never rings, a letter-box that is never opened, a knocker that will not lift, on a paint-blistered door, with panels of frosted glass through which one cannot see !

Ireland, of the country or of the town, has a growing chance to develop something in domestic architecture if she will but now recognise and respect her honest rectangularities, and, thinking of her own native wants, try to meet them with whatsoever knowledge she has acquired. That reads well because it is indefinite and can mean

many things. So I will conclude with a few definite particulars; understanding, good people, that if you do not wish to import your stock domestic architecture you must begin by patronising any native architect that has the courage to reject superfluities. You will, however, be very slow in patronising him because you are all suffering at present from one large festering sore of superfluities, and would feel a strange loss were it healed suddenly.

Here then are one or two definite particulars, and about interiors. The whole internal arrangements of imported suburbia are unsympathetic with the wants of Irishmen. A very spacious kitchen is one of these wants (I should say) of young married Ireland setting up housekeeping for itself. There should be room for *ceilidhs* and merrymaking, for the parlour is no place for such things, even if one must have a parlour. There must be a large window, because cooking should be done in a good light, at least, and there must be a window-seat where several may sit without their toes being trampled on by the dancers. This means that the window must be built out. Then for the storytelling of a winter night, there must be settles by the fire-place, and if a closed cooking range be necessary for young Ireland's developed appetite for baked meats, let such be at the other end of the room, where it can grow cold by neglect of an evening. Now, settles, and a chimney-breast, and a large recessed window, and beams to support the floor above, all lend themselves to beauty, even if they

be unadorned, because they all mean something, just as panelling around the walls means something, ministering to the affections, in a way that the plastered and papered walls of a mean little hole built out into the back yard never does. For, mind you, that such a kitchen as I have suggested could be built in city or suburb and as cheaply as any other that is duly and properly built; and, in narrow quarters, only means taking the greater part of the available area for the kitchen, the most important room in an Irish house. Upstairs, in town (or on the same level in the country where space is more readily obtained) we have the bedrooms. Now, if we live, we also die in the body, as well as sleep, and after all a bedroom is a good place to die in. The man who builds a house should not forget that he, like everybody else, must die sometime. There must be one bedroom, even if it be the only bedroom, where a body can be waked in a dignified Catholic manner, and perhaps Mass celebrated. Therein also a household shrine wherein a statuette of Our Lady can stand, emblematic of the purity of the home. Much light is not wanted in a place for sleeping, yet some is needed for dressing. Therefore the place for a bed should be where it is not possible for the rising sun to focus a beam, as if through a burning glass, upon one's uppermost eyelid of a morning; yet, indeed, the sunlight should enter, and the window should open so that one can lean forth under an eave, whether it rain or shine, and survey the world afresh every morn of the year.

To dress oneself without such a survey, is to rise, as one lay down, contained by the room. To lean forth under a guillotine is unpleasant, therefore the sash must be hung upon hinges, and as carelessness may leave it unfastened on a windy morning and glass be broken, small panes, which are more readily and cheaply repaired than large ones, should fill the sash. Also of a hot night in this country, where there are no mosquitoes, and the windows can be left open, latticed or perforated shutters will ensure both privacy and ventilation. Out of many more, and such wants as these, will beauty spring, if he who will supply them be but an architect who sees utility underlying beauty. Though I expect there is no cure for the jerry-building itch, and an essay such as this can do but little toward suggesting relief.





CANOPY FOR M.B. SACRAMENT, ST. SAVIOUR'S,  
DUBLIN.  
(BY WM. A. SCOTT, A.R.I.B.A.)

## ON SCULPTURE IN CATHOLIC IRELAND.

WHENEVER the writer of this essay on Catholic Ecclesiastical Sculpture attempts to consider religious statuary in a generalising mood, two very particular incidents of his early days constantly obtrude themselves from the gathering haze of the past. One, some twenty and more years ago, when he stood, bareheaded—a matter of ordinary obligation and reverence—and barefooted—a matter of choice—beneath the new roof of the very new Cathedral Church of St. Colman at Queenstown. The church was void of all ornamentation, and the smell of fresh, clean mortar and of lately hewn limestone was pleasant to the sense that sunny spring noonday. The sun was hot outside, and men were slumbering in the glare, but here the odour of fresh, cool lime seemed the incense of endeavour, was nowise repugnant, and stirred the energies. There was no sculpture in the church then. There is now, and visitors are expected to admire it. What the youth felt then was the loneliness of the ample shrine about him; the eye wanted a “good bodily image” to centre the wandering thought at times. But then the redundancy of blank space favourably impressed the writer with

a feeling of vastness ; last year the edifice oppressed him with a weak iteration of detail.

Now, the other incident of the two was, in a sense, a reversal of this latter feeling. It happened some time earlier at a place on the Sacramento River, California—a little waterside loading station that was burned down late one Saturday night. The writer had been carrying many buckets of water, and, feeling tired toward daybreak, had sat down beside a woman who was greatly distressed about her property, some relics of which lay scattered around her. She was an old Irish woman, and she had a voluble tongue. He sympathised with her as they both gazed at the smouldering ruins of her wooden shanty in the opening day. “God be praised, though, I have the blessed image,” presently she said, and she unwrapped a tablecloth, or something that concealed a plaster cast of Our Lady of Refuge. The amplitude of it all ; that is what is remembered as the thought which struck the youth. The amplitude of it all, though it stood on the bare earth, and looked so materially insignificant against the wide river and distant hills. This thought—the thought in a mood as rare and exceptional as the event—the ample sufficiency of all that was suddenly generated in the mind, to raise the soul to heaven, where its Queen dwells for eternity, sprang suddenly from the contemplation of its isolation. And—“God be praised, I have the blessed image ; though, to be sure, ‘I have ne’er a place to put it at all,” the old woman cried. . . .



Yet for sculpture there should be a place, a temple, a shrine, or a pedestal to dignify it ; and for the place that is holy there should be, in all carven imagery, that which emphasizes the character of the place to those whose imagination have need of it. These are initial problems of objective fitness, apart from more sacrosanct and subjective realities, whose accidentals the ugliest, the most tawdry of altars enshrines. Fitness, perhaps, is the keynote to all the arts, whether accessory or not to other arts. For sculpture, it certainly is the keynote ; and whatever may be the melody, it must be like the sound in a sea-shell, harmonious with its habitation. Donatello's Cantoria, or singing gallery, (formerly in the Duomo at Florence), is an example of fitness. St. George, now in the Bargello, by the same sculptor, is another. Such things, relegated to museums, lose their fitness with their venerable housing. A pyx in a tabernacle is a different thing from a pyx under a glass case in South Kensington Museum, and an ivory crucifix, with a descriptive label attached to it, has lost its primary purpose as much as the Elgin marbles in Bloomsbury. And even the utilities (and they are many to the student) can scarcely balance these losses of fitness. And the insignificance of an empty shrine, of a little plaster cast on the bare earth under the vast heavens, of the Ilissus of Phidias in a gallery of antiquities, is the insignificance of unfitness.

Fitness is the initial problem ; there are others.

If a Dublin merchant knocked away a few bricks from the angle of his ugly house, and, constructing a niche, placed a figure of our Lady of Refuge, looking down upon us, crowds of sinful humanity hustling each other on the pathway, it might be a fitting thing to do, and his house become transformed. Some man or woman might look up, hesitate, and turn homewards again. Fitness would have accomplished something. But unless the figure were, beyond cavil, a concrete rendering of the thought from Him who first taught men that Our Lady was truly Our Lady of Refuge, fitness of localisation, of purpose, would be hampered, though they were not eliminated, by the defects of execution. It is one thing to sing, as best one may, *Adeste Fideles* at the first Mass on Christmas morning, it is another to compose such incomparable music, or to sing it as it should be sung. It is one thing to preach a stock penitential sermon in Lent ; it is another to make a sermon an inductive force through the art of constructive and beautiful speech and reasoning. And just as weak singing or weak preaching may fail in its direct and immediate object, so may weak sculpture or weak painting fail to set a certain other imperishable force free. In this article the writer desires the reader to comprehend, or, at least, to apprehend, the nature of that force, which, though divine, may be kept securely locked ; as unreleasable in that fine colossal creation of the great Michael Angelo—the David—as in the cheap little painted cast of St. Anthony in a Dublin

shop window. So that, in religious sculpture, (for there is such a thing as religious sculpture) there is something else beside fitness of location and excellence of work. And this it is, that it must have with this happy combination of fitness and excellence, a power that comes of the creative faculties in the artist to release an operative force distinctly devotional, which force is, at the same time, beyond speculative distrust. We can give it no name ; this peculiar power lies not in some of the greater creations in European sculpture since the Greeks, and we find it in comparatively lesser work.\*

But, it may be urged, is not, after all, this force brought by the observer himself ; released by himself, and that which he takes as emanating is but a reflecting of what he has brought ? This theory would put much of the sculpture in Catholic Irish churches on secure pedestals of religious utility ; but it cannot raise them in the category of Catholic art. For the Church herself, through her glorious sons of art in the past, condemns many of them as vapid and as falsely modern conventional renderings of certain sublime realities. So that, in the following criticism of what the writer has looked at with some intent lately, the reader is requested to separate these two ideas : one of the purpose brought by the worshipper, in church (or, as it may be, that of the dying man, kissing, ah ! how justly and reverently,

\* Technically ; in the art itself.

the most inartistic of crucifixes), and the other the creative purpose of the Christian artist. The reader may have noted that the writer has before based his plea for better church art (and, inclusively, better sculpture) on the theory that the higher the art the better the quality of the devotional force released. For more art; and for better art; for more devotion, if it be necessary, and for better devotion, if it be possible.\*

Should one, interested in churches and invincibly ignorant of shops, make an inquiry into the origin or cost of certain of their decorative features he may become enlightened in strange and unexpected ways. To a verbal inquiry about an altar an answer has been known to take somewhat of this

\* Also see *The Leader*, if the reader is interested in this point, for a discussion on the value of good work as stimulative to devotion, 20th September; 4th and 18th October, 1902. I quote here a few words from one of my own articles:—"In the Penal days, devotion was never so fervent, although statues, and chapels, and churches in which to place them, did not exist. The imagination of the people then was uncontaminated by ugly crudities. And the devotion of the unlettered peasantry was as pathetic, as intense, and as great—nay, greater probably—than it had ever been before. It was a greatness that sprang from no marble incentive. But now the Church has gained power, and the people comparative freedom, and all recognise the necessity to maintain the old and evoke a fresh spirit of devotion. Are the means used really adequate? The resultant devotion should not lose quality. I would advance this thesis: no statuary or good statuary." I advance it here, again, 1904; *imperfect* statuary, of course, need not necessarily be bad sculpture. To continue:—"A rattle or a doll pleases a child—brings joy somehow to his little heart—evokes pleasure and stirs interest. When he grows bigger, he is taught (or should be) that reverence and devotion to anything lifeless, proceeds from a craving to worship something (or somebody). The craving is right enough. He has been (we may hope) directed to seek within himself for the presence of the One Eternal; and he

form :—" Yes, it is greatly admired. It cost £650, and is the work of O'Bragherty & Sons, of Hanover Street, the celebrated sculptors. Never heard of them do you say, and you write about art ? Indeed ! and you have lived all these years in Ireland ! The architect of the church says this is the finest altar of its kind in Ireland. What kind ? The Gothic kind, of course. It is all Carrara marble—except where it is Sicilian—and there's not a bit of common limestone in the whole altar. Look at those alto-relievoes—alto means high, you know—high reliefs—that's St. Michael defeating Satan, and that's Satan tempting Eve—pure Carrara every bit of it. That tall pinnacle has sixty-four

begins to honour God through the stimulated senses, which are kept in subjection by obeying the divine ordinances presented to him by the Church. Very well. This stimulation through the senses comes from art. Bad art or good art, its object is the same—for him. For the artist it is another matter ; or it may be, and generally is. . . . But from the point of view of the worshipper the matter of devotion takes the chief place. Now, it may be calculated, that whatever measures the artist will measure his work—whatever his feeling of fitness—of beauty—whatever his methods of production, and whatever be the conditions under which he works, will measure and explain the result." Then foreign tradesmen are referred to, and I might have included some native (or domiciled) tradesmen as well. This tradesman sculptor—"creates for profit alone, however little the middleman and agencies may leave him ; and if he have but the washed-out apology for an artistic soul, the work itself can give him but little or no pleasure. Otherwise, one must lose faith in everything." As a rule, you will find that tradesmen generally take more pleasure in the *quantity* of their output than in the productions themselves. Every soul seeks for pleasure in something stable, and a large output is a *fact* to a business-like mind ; and a fact that can boil many a pot in this commercial country. "How then can such work stimulate the true devotion of the soul ; a devotion which is based on the spiritual delight of honouring and worshipping God ?"

crockets on it ; we could have had seventy-two, but the Canon thought sixty-four enough for such a small church ; and every crocket took the sculptor a day to carve ; a whole day. Isn't it a splendid pinnacle ? There are only three others exactly like it, and they were made by the same firm. M'Chipperly's pinnacles on the side altars are very inferior to these of O'Bragherty's. What do you think of St. Michael driving Satan out of Heaven ; isn't it a marvellous bit of work ? Gothic drapery on the angels to harmonise with the pinnacles. What do you think of it ? All in pure Carrara, except the canopies and the frontal. How can it be done for the money ? That is more than I can tell ; and I have seen an altar all in pure white marble, with thirty-two crockets on the spike (but only four figures, and they in plaster), and alabaster shafts to the columns, which cost the priest £100 ! Have you seen it ; it's at a place called Finglas ? Well, what do you think of this one ? The *architect* likes it immensely."

To such a summing-up ; to such a one who looks at things from such a point of view ; to the clergy at large who consider a polished shaft, or a crocket even in Sicilian marble, of any value apart from its shape, there is but one form of answer—"that Carrara marble is extremely good marble ; that it is a pity such good marble has been chipped about with a chisel ; and *that* having unavoidably happened, it is a further pity that *all* the marks have not been sand-papered away—for Carrara

marble looks so beautiful in the block, fresh and unspoiled from the quarry." \*

Seriously, or more seriously, for, indeed, what has just been written emphasises a serious matter for the artist—trade art is visible everywhere, and fine art, the work of artists, nowhere. The writer has looked, and looked almost in vain as yet, in Dublin, for some sign of its absence.† It is present everywhere in pro-cathedral and in community chapel. Certainly, mementoes of a past period—and a very indifferent period—such as Farrell's monuments of Cardinal Cullen and Archbishop Murray, and Hogan's "Dead Christ" are to be seen ; but of there being erected now, or lately erected, the work of a sculptor who is also an artist, there are no visible signs. And I include the works of Farrell and even Hogan—the latter the best, perhaps, of that poor period—in the general church category of poor sculpture. There is next to nothing in the Catholic churches of Dublin worth consideration as a work of fine art ; or if there be anything

\* This passage, as well as others in the essay, provoked a personal and rather abusive (if amusing) attack from two tradesmen upon the writer, in the columns of the *Irish Builder* for May 7th, 1903, *et. seq.* One of them stated that the writer did not know that "Sicilian" marble came from the "Carrara" district. I have added no explanation in the text, but anybody can see (as I stated in one of my replies, the last, on July 2nd) that this distinction of name is allowed by me as customary, and that my word "Carrara" in this paragraph is inclusive of the preceding "Sicilian." This discussion (and on other points) ran through some five or six numbers of the *Irish Builder*, and many compliments were exchanged.

† At Loughrea there are now some indications of an improvement ; *e.g.*, in the interior sculpture.—See *Introduction*.

beyond one or two slight exceptions which I shall refer to, I shall be very glad to know of it, to study it, and to admit it after such study. The nearest approach in figure work is Hogan's "Christ" and in decorative marble work the interior features of the University Church, Stephen's Green. One must clutch at straws sometimes if there be no planks convenient. A figure like that at St. Teresa's, or like those in the Pieta at St. Nicholas's, by Hogan, are something to form a basis of comparison, and they have not yet been painted white, (like what one sees under the dome at Rathmines) or in any other colour.

As for isolated coloured statuary in general, the writer intends to dismiss this part of the subject in a few lines, and will then return to the altars, pulpits, and generally decorative sculpture, which is the main purpose of this essay.

Supposing it were possible, in wood, wax, marble, or any other substance, coloured, to closely imitate the natural flesh, hair, draperies, and so forth, of a living person, what is the result at its best? A close imitation; never still life illustrating life, which is the one poor attraction of a *tableau vivant*. But it also imposes more limitation upon the sculptor than work without colour. That is a singular assertion, the reader may think, because surely, glass eyes, painted hair, blue veins, pinken cheeks, crimson lip, surely these are extensions that have overridden limitations? These attempts to eliminate limitations do but set up fresh ones



inherent in the very media employed. Now, imagine Michael Angelo's "David" to be painted, for example; what would be the result? A monstrous imitation of a beautiful youth; not a colossal work of beauty truly suggesting life, and ideal and glorified form, despite defects, which it is at present. Naturalistic colour imposes upon its user in sculpture the negation of all heroic treatment, for such colour, in the round, only emphasizes the disparity between the real and the ideal. I am excepting here the use of coloured materials, such as those used in chryselephantine work, which the Greeks excelled in. But it has some charm in portraiture; just for example the bust of Niccolo da Uzzano in the Bargello, or for that matter the little bust in the Kildare Street Museum, after, or by, Donatello, will show the Dublin observer that; and there is a bust, said to be by Roubilliac, in the National Portrait Gallery, London, in a glass case on an upper floor, that seemed to the writer, some years ago, as illustrating the utmost that naturalistic colour can do in this way. But once the true limitations of the inherent colour of material, whether bronze, silver, marble, terracotta, ivory, or even plaster, (except a delicate toning down of its crudity, not for naturalistic effect), are ignored, and others imposed in the attempt to escape from the former, fresh difficulties arise out of these further limitations. The figure of a permanently immovable woman, still living, would be as pleasant as might the appearance of

Lot's wife, just, as we might imagine, before her saline crystallization began. But, as a figure in pure homogeneous salt, she was probably a very beautiful, if anomalous, embodiment of regret. Hermione must come down from her pedestal and speak to Leontes, and for his audience. Unless a figure, painted to the life, move and speak for us—shew us that it is really alive—we are dissatisfied. We are cheated, because all has not been given us that is promised. Coloured presentments, in the round, should be left to Madame Tussaud's, or to the portraitist at the best. In relief work, it is another matter entirely, and in the hands of a clever artist, coloured reliefs, and the lower the better, like wall and other paintings, may be æsthetically as perfect as anything on earth can be. But in "the round" the round itself is a law-fixed limitation. Let that law be broken by general desire and depraved taste, or want of taste, and behold!—upturned eyes darkened beneath the lids, as if with sickness and the abnormal flush of fever on the cheek; paint, but not skin; colour, but not true life; false colour, but not true form beneath to carry it effectively, even were the colour good; colour relied upon everywhere by the trade artist to obliterate all his defects of modelling; and the true aims of the sculptor—form mass, force, design, the beauty and the poetry of line—nowhere. Nowhere! I challenge any parish priest, say in Dublin, to show me one coloured statue in his church that shall be worthy of

unqualified praise as sculptured form. That is all the writer has to say here about coloured statuary.\*

Returning to the general subject, a thought, a phrase—one of those grand, simple, religious phrases, which are little gems of verbal art themselves—rises in the writer's mind. "To the greater glory of God." It is a beautiful motto, common enough in Catholic homes and places of worship, yet never common-place; still, this fine aspiration becomes under certain conditions of aspect a mocking solecism of alliteration. Whenever I read "Ad majoram Dei gloriam" above work that is not of the best that artist, painter, or sculptor could give,—and this has nothing to do with expense—the motto more than irritates; it almost exasperates. Commercialism and shop-jobbery has no ideal to strive for, no aspiration except money-making; and it is not to the point that the erector, or benefactor, of a bad work of art has done his "best" according to his light. These have not, *in art*, any real best to do. Surely,

\* Except to add that colour can be suggested—*natural* colour can be suggested—by the use of certain materials; but such suggestion is not deceptive, it remains acknowledged suggestion, beautiful in itself. The Greeks, probably, even when they stained their marbles, improved on the Egyptian method. They also used gold and bronze, and other metals, in conjunction with marble, as trappings and ornaments. These suggested leather, etc., or sometimes were representative of the actual material ornamentally used by living men. But there was never, we may firmly hold, any deliberate striving after verisimilitude of natural colour all round. In the Etruscan tombs portraiture was probably the chief object in the use of colour.

anything offered to the greater glory of God must competently be of what is best in a man. This may exonerate the priest ; exonerate the benefactor ; but it does not exonerate the tradesman, nor the architect who recommends him. With them it is simply a matter of profit, however small, though indeed, it may, on rare occasions of competitive "cutting down" of prices, spell loss. But it is a *matter* of profit, a *motive* of profit, of business, of trade. It cannot be denied. Let anybody who has eyes visit the altars and pulpits of our Irish churches, note that these speak for themselves. There they are, almost vocal with their trade-marks, and it strikes upon the consciousness as if through one's ears—"to the greater gain of the tradesman." Profit is a good thing, a necessary thing, but it should not be the motive, and whenever profit is legibly stamped as a motive on an altar, or a statue, or a pulpit, it is necessarily a failure as a work of art, and "to the greater gain of the tradesman" has supplanted "to the greater glory of God."

We find in the church of St. Andrew (Westland Row, Dublin) the typical altar of the period preceding the general Puginising of Ireland. A white marble table, with a gradino canopy supporting a dome, surmounted usually by a small cross. The canopy for the crucifix or monstrance has always classic columns, etc., and one may guess the exact form of the altar in churches of this class by a survey of the facade on the street. Probably the one at St.

Nicholas's, which, I believe, came from Rome, many years ago, set up an early Victorian fashion in altars which Puginism afterwards supplanted. Be that as it may, we find this type of altar common in Dublin; at the Pro-Cathedral, at St. Teresa's, at Rathmines Parish Church, at the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, and elsewhere, beside those at St. Andrew's and St. Nicholas's, mentioned above; in fact, in all the older churches of Dublin. It points as strongly to trade-created fashion as do the modern "Gothic" altars now being erected all over the country. At the Church of the Three Patrons, some tradesman's individuality allowed itself a little scope, for he added an upper tier of classic columns in what, we may presume, he considered a fine "renaissance" style. And where there are reliefs on the frontals, etc., of these altars, the poor standard of Glasnevin Cemetery is hardly reached.

The architect and the tradesman seemed to have always had a merry time with the clergy, but of late \* they have entered on a period of orgy. One scarcely knows how to begin an attack on the "Gothic" altars. They should be attacked, in the cause of common every-day artistic justice; but to do it calmly, without allowing indifference to grow with the temperate use of language, is not an easy matter.

Donatello, who has given us a St. George for all time, and a Child St. John, and a Baptist of the

\* Written in March, 1903.

Wilderness,\* and Annunciations, and altar reliefs, and singing galleries, and crucifixes and bronzes, busts, carven woods, and how much more the mind can hardly grasp at a flight—this Donatello, the saint maker, just like most of his contemporary Florentines, had a purpose, an ideal, beyond the inevitable patronage, and fame, and recompense. He shewed it, it is said, when fourteen years old. “To thee it is given to sculpture a Christ; I can only make peasants.” This to Brunellesco, the lesser artist, a year or two later. I like Donatello there; he begins modestly, and I believe in the truth of this and many another anecdote, because the life work bears them out. Some time ago a stone carver said to the writer, “All this relief work is paid by the foot, so one can rarely go wrong in an estimate for an altar.” “But there may be but little profit sometimes when all is done.”—“Ah that comes of errors in the estimated cost of material and the time for setting it up; we never go wrong about the carving.” “But who ‘designs’ it all, if it is designed at all?” “Oh, we have the regular patterns, if that is what you mean.” So much per square foot! All sculptors, all artists, must be paid for their work,† and good

\* The one with the scrip—a marble figure, now in the Bargello at Florence—especially.

† “The invincible pertinacity of Niccolo, in refusing to work till he had received his usual deposit, occasioned Lorenzo to give him the name of *Il Coparra*, by which he was ever afterwards generally known.” *Roscoe’s Life of Lorenzo de’ Medici*. Niccolo Grosso, the Florentine, was a hammerer of iron; he insisted on ready money, but he was no time server. See also *L’arte Marchese, O.P.*, for payment of artists, long ago.

craftsmen should be well paid ; but these measuring men are but trade mechanics, misdirected artizans—not artists. Yes, and that is the point. Between the architect who recommends (and sometimes designs), and the tradesman who exploits cheap, indifferent artizanry, sculpture is in a pretty mess. In art, all primary money motives produce the same results ; degeneration and stagnation ultimately.

Let us approach these “Gothic” altars, and shrines, leisurely, and keep calm if we can. Donatello and Verrocchio and Benedetto da Majano, and the Della Robbias knew they were artists without doubt, but your modern tradesman firmly believes that *he* is an artist ! And their patrons actually believe it, and express their belief without any hesitation. One has only to read some trade advertisements to discover that. As a matter of fact, they are just ordinary tradesmen, trained in certain “styles,” and making weak, watery, insipid hash of those styles. A father or mother, say, will apprentice an intelligent schoolboy to a sculptor (meaning usually a shop-keeping stone carver). The boy develops business capacity anyway, whatever else he escapes, and in after days sets up a monumental yard, or perhaps something behind plate glass windows. Then he and the architect league together to play ducks and drakes with the innocent clergy. And behold the result, spreading like the white sugary ornaments of a titanic wedding cake over the good brown earth of Ireland. Why, some of these firms

actually take an unique and unqualified pride in their mere pinnacly output ! In their *output*, like a colliery or a match factory, or a Whitechapel sweating tailor. How can the *art* of the sculptor flourish under these commercial conditions ? Hammer, hammer, hammer ; pilaster, pediment and pinnacle ; fill up every corner of the church ; we give thirteen to the dozen ; crockets are the best value if you want a fine *rich* effect at a moderate cost !

But let us, who distinguish between shop art and the art of the sculptor keep calm, if not cool ; for one may grow strangely warm whilst looking at the coldest of Carrara marble altars. The cold callous disregard of all human emotion remain as fixed in the carven work as it did in the unshapen mass of the mountain quarry ; but it may be that the energy which shaped the block, and afterwards maltreated it, sends forth some reciprocal rays to stir the pulse and to indignantly fire the nerves. And, indeed, for the devotional Catholic taking the traditions about Cromwell—Oliver or Thomas, or the two men and the two periods rolled together as representing British iconoclasm—taking them as true tradition, to think that the sudden re-incarnation of the iconoclastic spirit would at least rid us of some of those cheaply chaste nightmares in spiky marble, is halfway to sacrilegiously long for it. And that is enough to warm the conscientious observer. There they are—donative, bequeathive, and votive ; and there they will probably remain until another Crom-



wellian, or some greater Yellow Peril sweeps down upon us. But speculations into futurity aside, it is provocative of bitter wishes to consider that ecclesiastical consecration has made these misused stones holy for all time, and, perhaps, that nothing short of fire, earthquake, religious rebellion, or barbarian incursion can ever destroy them. And that is how one grows warm when looking at these tradesmen's stock-in-trade. The muscles begin to anticipate exercise.

The writer has seldom cared to enquire as to the immediate origin of these altars. They are probably by many various firms, and some may have been imported. It is a matter of indifference ; they are mostly alike in inartistic degradation. One may detect a pinnacle borrowed from Cologne or Milan or Lichfield, or anywhere ; capitals, crockets, high-reliefs from everywhere, including pictures. One need not ask for the name of the "designer"—there is no designer ; there is only an adapter, a feeble conglomerator. As in stained glass, a number of trade firms seemed to have competed to outdo each other in reciprocal imitation. And they have all excelled beyond their own dreams. How could it be otherwise ? Just as the jobbing printer has his stock of fancy curly-queues, initials, borders, head and tail pieces, etc., so has the commercial marble mason his stock designs of pinnacles, finials, canopies, reliefs, statuettes, and whatnot. He can give the parish priest a tabernacle, with, or without, a canopy ; a gradino,

with, or without, a reredos ; capitals to suit this, that, or the other shaft of a column ; or he can have all together with a crowning pinnacle and seventy-two crockets. Stock to suit any and every purse ; any magnitude of bequest and donation. Why, if a bequest be invested in Government stock pending the rebuilding of the church, and it be sold out eventually at a profit, perhaps two more spires and an extra bit of alabaster could be added, and the British taxpayer be indirectly made to contribute to an "Irish work of art." Those excellent people who pay for shrines and altars, those excellent bishops, priors, and priests, who labour to beautify their churches to the best of their ability, and those very industrious, newspaper puffed, architect hob-nobbing monumental masons cannot know a work of art when they see it ; or if they do, they apparently receive no stimulus, no advantage, no lesson from its contemplation.\* Let one go (if he himself be not an artist) to a sculptor of repute and an artist, and with him, visit the following churches, if he cannot judge for himself : Donnybrook Church, St. Joseph's, Berkeley Street ; St. Saviour's, Dominick Street ; St. Kevin's, Harrington Street ; the Church of the

\* In thinking this point over, I am at present of an opinion that the honours of bad taste, and unsound sentiment, and false economy, and what is called "money value," are fairly divided between benefactor, acting patron, and the tradesman. Never, at any rate, in the history of this world, that hangs together on a twisted thread of religion and art, can there ever have been such a combination of wrong-headedness as we see in modern Ireland.

Oblates, Inchicore Church, St. Catherine's, Meath Street; St. Michael's, Kingstown, and St. John's Augustinian Church (side altars only, as high altar appears to be a temporary one of painted wood), and perhaps the high altar of St. Mary's, Haddington Road, which at least has a borrowed charm of reticence, with its horizontal lines and but *one* pinnacle. Let him take those just for representative examples.\*

Incapability may certainly enjoy and admire, and may have wonderful dreams of beauty, just as a certain type of painter will have, what he terms, visions of spiritual painting; though he be unable to draw or paint a face, or a hand, or a bit of drapery, and only makes a fool of himself when he attempts it and gets his work exhibited. But when incapability has no beautiful dreams as well as no artistic talent, and very indifferent executive talent to carry out the bad work of another, it makes the most uninteresting commercial pot-boiling stone carver that this trade-plagued, plate-glassed, crocketed country has ever been eager to support with delight. The very uncriticised success of these numerous firms, scattered throughout Ireland, is a certain sign of intellectual stagnation so far as art is concerned. In no other country could such a general spreading of all that is in-artistic have taken place without the protest of

\* This article was originally on the sculpture in Dublin Churches, and as such it still stands in the main; but what I have written of Dublin may be applied to the majority of the towns that I have visited.

newspapers and magazines. The majority of the Irish papers were afraid to publish the truth, and I believe it is still so, even where their editors can now see it for themselves. We may be sure now that any attack upon or departure from the cut and dried tradition of imported Puginism will stir the depths, for the passage of the architect and the marble mason to eminence has been across an unruffled sea of ignorance. And the purpose of any dweller in this island who knows the true from the false, and art from the exploitation of artizanry, should be to raise a few critical borean blasts for the sails of fearless sea-worthy artists; for the others have had a calm, prosperous, if sadly monotonous voyage in their patched-up, commercial coffin-ship.

Yet the "Gothic" craze which set in some fifty years ago in England, and is wearing itself out already has, apparently, still a future in Ireland. And then the next craze will be a Romanesque or a Byzantine one, we may suppose, still imitating England in this, and a falling back on Cormac's Chapel at Cashel as a sort of guarantee that the Irish spirit has at length been found and fostered.

Any played out "artistic idea" that comes across the Irish sea can spend the last of its declining days in this haven of rest, and be fed by sympathetic hands while it lingers, provided there are tradesmen to nurse it. If there are no tradesmen to exploit it, it returns to London and lectures on itself as a new thing in art, and its short, derelict, sojourn

here really does help it to prolong its days in its regained native home, and sometimes it takes back with itself the smell of the turf fire beside which for a space it warmed itself. It may be even that some Irish Gothic sculptors will yet go across to London and deliver successful lectures on the revival of Irish sculpture.

Perhaps it all comes of too much elementary-art teaching, even in Ireland. The great things seemed to have been done when there was no elementary art-teaching for the masses. Now-a-days we are tied up with styles, and periods, and schools. If a bit of drapery in an altar relief is not executed in the manner which a student has learned, in the vogue of, say, the thirteenth century, and the severe finial on the top of the belfry spire outside is so executed, his mis-directed sense of fitness receives a shock. He recalls the notes of the lecturer on architecture, and finds that such things are condemned as impurity in style. And a "Gothic" saint must be designed in face, form and drapery to "match" the architect's Early English niche. At length the over-receptive and uncreative student begins to reckon so many folds to Our Lady's "late decorated" gown; so many kinks or knots to the habit of St. Francis for such and such a particular period; and then, all in due sequence, so many crockets on a pinnacle for so many kinks and folds to the said draperies of the said figures of Our Lady and St. Francis in the style of the aforesaid particular

periods. And his rule of thumb apparently becomes almost as sacred a tradition as that age-created symbolism which alone ought to check the absolute freedom of more secular work. But he seems to blend the two rules so that one cannot tell where symbolism ends, and rule of thumb begins.

The so-called sculptors in this country should unbuckle their minds a little. It is doubtful if the "Gothic" ones among them (though I really don't know exactly in what a "Gothic" sculptor differs from any other, unless it be in a more barbaric indifference to feeling), it is doubtful whether they would not resist as a foul temptation the suggestion that the lintel headed, and round arched, and pointed and ogival headed windows, niches, doors, or panels, might not be united in the same building, tomb, altar, or chapel shrine; and that a better harmony might be the result than is the case in some of their affectedly homogeneous designs. I am not attracted by the church at Haddington Road, but at least somebody had the courage to put a *dome* on a side altar there. Perhaps he felt emboldened by the fact that certain other features about were suggestive of a very late period of Gothic art, and when Renaissance domes were already in the air. Now, as in stained glass and in wall decoration, limitations there are—let them be granted—but self-created limitations where nothing beautiful is gained thereby, are of the foolishness that comes of this craze

for style. Style, in any work, comes from the man himself, not through other men. Study the best styles should never mean borrow the very best of them. Style comes of the acceptance of inherent limitations, treated sincerely and cultivated with love; not from the borrowed limitations of other men's styles. Alas! these fourteenth century revivings of all that can never live again; these churches where everybody who has read a book on architecture, feels uneasy, or disdainful, because some stone carver has committed the unpardonable sin of putting an Early English finial on to the altar canopy of a "later period!" Character and personality are as nothing to one whose mind is moulded in the cast-iron rigidity of a literature taught art. Times were when men were agog with varied expectations, as churches uprose against the grey skies, or in the sun-light charged air; they happily knew not what to expect; the building unfolded its glory as it grew; and it grew slowly as all great things grow. For in those days churches and mushrooms were distinctly different in the period of their growth. Now, one may tell by the shape of the foundation stone, or by the length of a scaffold pole, exactly what the sanctuary and its high altar will be like when completed that day twelve months.

In good truth both "Gothic" and Renaissance architects and builders, and monumental masons, or stone-carvers, or whatever (besides sculptors),

these gentlemen of business call themselves, with their styles and their periods, have had a right gleeful time with the innocent and economical clergy. But, in justice, how could the country have foreweighed such procedure, when it had been deprived of the balance to weigh withal? A few looked on during the last twenty years with quiet amazement, but the many were greatly and innocently pleased with their expanding wedding cake. Ireland had never had such a spiny crust since first she arose from out the Atlantic; and the round towers to these crocketted spires and pinnacles were as the long fingers of Fate to the multitudinous spikes of the "fretful" porcupine.

However, we may leave architecture, in general to another essay, and altars alone for the present. Let us now take work in relief, such as Stations of the Cross. These are usually in coloured relief. For my part I was never so appalled as when I first saw one of these modern importations. And it was not in Ireland either, but in a foreign church where there were nobler works of art. But there are many in Dublin and other Irish churches. Not that coloured relief is in any way objectionable; it is highly desirable if it be done well. That is to say if the figures be well modelled, the designs be good, and the colour always correctly playing second fiddle and not the unnecessary brazen trombone. But unless the colour of these Stations, such as that set at St. Mary's, Haddington Road, for example, did not play a



very deafening and brazen trombone, one might enquire about the first fiddle. There is no modelling in most of these things from a sculpturesque standpoint; it is all crude trombone colour, ta-ra-pom-pom-pah colour, and not high relief, nor low relief, nor even degraded relief. If they were washed clean that would be readily discovered, or if a plain cast were taken of them. Your indifferent modeller of such things always relies upon his cheap colour and not upon his form. Just let the reader look at one of the blocks accompanying this article, that of the lunette by Andrea della Robbia—St. Francis and St. Dominic.\* That and many another of the works of this master (and of Luca della Robbia also) have the modelling that comes of sculpture and sculpture alone. It is not a half-and-half affair whereon to hang paint and to make an indifferent picture like the “Ascension” in the vaulting at Marlborough St.; and indeed, if he looks at a good plaster cast after these early Italian coloured works, as you may in some of the museums, he will see that; for these casts are usually uncoloured. In fact some of the Della Robbia reliefs in the Bargello would be better without their colour, in the writer’s opinion. But your modern Station in relief—not only those in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland—if it lost its colour, would not certainly be improved; it would be that undesigned atony

\* This was the lunette in the Loggia di San Paolo, Florence, opposite the church of Santa Maria Novella there.

again, which coloured crudity had separated into definite if unpleasant elements. The interior of the Catholic University Chapel would be better without their set; and had those semicircular spaces above the marble panels on the wall been treated as Stations in flat work—mosaic, or paint, or fresco—there would have been no need to have other Stations there.

In this University Chapel there is some fairly good carving, by the way; a gallery in comparatively good taste and a pulpit in excellent. The capitals of the marble pilasters are deep incised work with decorative feeling, and in fact all the caps in this church are superior to the majority of such like ornaments elsewhere. It is a relief, and a plain one, to sit in this church after a tour around the others; and what might have been done in two fairly good buildings like the Augustinian Church and St. Saviour's, Dominick Street, strikes one very forcibly when noting what has been done within such narrow restrictions as are here imposed. And perhaps the restrictions of the place are to be credited for the position and design of the pulpit and steps, and for the opposite gallery. Anyway the effect is excellent, and that is enough. As I suggested before, in this church one finds straws to clutch at.\*

\* In other parts of Ireland I have found several straws to clutch at. At Loughrea, for example, in the corbels there. I have also seen other work in progress for the interior of this Cathedral Church; but as I intend to write further on all the recent, and proposed work there, I shall not refer at any length to it here.

About pulpits, there is also a quiet, unpretentious, dignified, marble one at St. Nicholas's, Francis Street. But the majority of the Gothic pulpits are of a stock octagonal form with a stock saint in high relief in each of the stock panels. And very poor stock it is. One is almost in the humour to overpraise the more classical ones, or the wooden ones at Marlborough Street, and St. Saviour's, and to become quite eulogistic over the carved oak one in St. Audoen's, High Street. This latter one is, all things considered, a worthy bit of work.

It happens sometimes that a parish priest, or the superior of an order, wishes to erect a memorial, or a votive tablet, or a portrait relief, or perhaps a bust, and he has in a new church practically the whole of it in which to select a site.

The writer's experience is showing him daily that if there be one site worse than another the worse is invariably chosen. If a low, full-front, light can be made to fall on a relief, or a diffused uncertain light, it seems to be deliberately chosen. Let that marble portrait relief of His Holiness be taken for example—the one at Inchicore, O.M.I. I am afraid it is but an indifferent piece of work; but in any case, placed where it is, and behind glass as well, it is impossible to judge. Why it should be behind glass I cannot conjecture. The sooner marble colours with age the better. One may constantly note this want of appreciation of the values of top lighting. The sculptor should know

beforehand how the light is going to fall upon his work before it is executed. Sculpture is primarily a question of light and shade, and relief work depends entirely for its effects upon a proper disposition of the light.\*

And what can be expected of people who put statues up on niches like those of the church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, or colossal heads in the ceiling as at St. Andrew's? Where there is a light from the dome, as at Rathmines, the figures on the central piers stand in a proper light; and it is a pity there are not better figures to stand there; but in many of the churches light is never studied at all, and a plaster cast is brought over from Italy or Bavaria to fill up a corner, with no other decorative object than to fill that corner. But the clergy have other objects? True. With their other objects one need not be critically concerned, and it is only when those other objects seem undermined or weakened by the undecorative objects that perhaps they can be inveigled to listen at all by pointing out the failure as decoration.

It may be that the writer of this and of other similar essays of general depreciation may be set down as a dyspeptic of the *nil admirari* school of criticism. He trusts he is far from being one, but he has studied practical art for many years, and

\* Some of the finest cathedrals abroad are unfortunately ill-adapted for the effective display of later sculpture; detached statuary, that is. Sometimes fortunately also.

he humbly claims to know the true from the false, the first-rate from the fifth-rate, and can discern between excellence of intention and faulty realization; between praise-worthy zeal and inordinate haste; between those who exhibit commendable self denial and those who profit by it in the callousness of commercialism—in fine, between those who cheerfully pay out of their riches or out of their poverty, for something that the soul nobly desires, and those who have taken a cruel advantage to introduce a cheap and meretricious art. It is time this were put an end to for the credit both of art and of its ecclesiastical lovers. One cannot serve both art and jobbery, and he, after all, is the more enviable man who is not afraid to write the truth as he knows it; and they the more enviable who succeed in recognizing the truth when it is fairly presented to them.

After all, what is the meaning of sculpture to those who love it? Truly, as a religious art it is worthy of love. Let the reader just consider, for example, that statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, called Our Lady of Limerick, and remember the devotion of those who approach it in their trouble, and gain such undoubted assistance in their approach. It is an older Spanish statue, I believe, and has been indifferently painted.

Truly, were that statue non-existent, many a weary heart would have never received solace, strength, and hope. Yet can anybody who claims

to have a soul within his body gaze upon the majority of these modern Munich, Italian, and French importations without a sinking fear that anything, provided it be cheap enough, has been thought worthy of the honour of God? It matters little in this connection, whether in after days, through these concrete supplications, the piety of congregations returns to them a hundred-fold in blessings. This might, indeed, have happened through a hidden relic, never seen, hermetically encased; but the purpose of a statue is surely first and foremost to honour and glorify God through the merits of the saint represented. What, then, should that statue be? Should it not be at least the work of an artist? Sculpture in the churches has the most intense of meanings. How intense this has been through all the ages, from the very cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant! It has for the worshipper a hidden beauty, an inwardly revealing beauty, an inviolable beauty, yet, despite all attempted explanation, an incomprehensible beauty. The meanest religious statue has this, yet no statue should be mean withal. A good statue should help, if it cannot create, such inward revelation of mystical truth through perfect form and idea. The best work will the best help. The absolute beauty of form is a matter of soul revelation, but he who can approach nearer the awakened conceptions with his artistic command of form is nearer the service of the Absolute. A great artist like Michael Angelo,

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half pagan in his method,\* is yet nearer this service than many more Christian and lesser artists. Let there be no misunderstanding about this. Artists like Donatello, Mino da Fiesole, Benedetto Da Majano, or the Della Robbias are the nearest ; but your most Christian artist, who has but little or no ability, can never by his *art*, or the want of it, serve his Creator effectively. He might succeed as a preacher, but not as a sculptor. Yet a man must needs be an artist to preach effectively, even against art.

All the generators of beautiful things the Supreme can bend to His will. Genius is the gift of God ; form, one of the qualities of beauty ; and it is only when genius, striving through form (and line and design, and mass, which are but parts of form), succeeds in materializing an idea derived from the divine, that anything in sculpture can be made which shall truly bring man to the confines of that invisible, mystic land wherein perfect form ever dwells at one with the perfect idea.

Albrecht Durer, the painter and the engraver, struggling ineffectually against, and drawn into,

\* I thought, when I first looked up at Michael Angelo's *Pietà* in St. Peter's, Rome—also, now when I look at other *Madonnas* and *Christs* of his, I think of these lines, which I believe were written by an Irishman—Maurice Egan—of a Frenchman :—

“ A pagan heart, a Christian soul had he,  
He followed Christ, yet for dead Pan he sigh'd,  
Till earth and heaven met within his breast :  
As if Theocritus in Sicily, had come upon the Figure  
crucified,  
And lost his gods in deep, Christ-given rest.

the evangelical so-called reforming influences of his Nürenberg surroundings, had that keen, artistic insight (which knows rather than sees, perhaps) that religion and visible imagery are indissolubly united in the soul of man. Not he alone—not preferably he, except as an explanatory, artistic example—but the whole race of man has shown that. But it is the art in a man which gives him a clearer perception of its truth, and it may be fitting to conclude this essay by quoting the words of this German artist and an admirer and follower of Melanchthon, and one of whom Camerarius wrote in his introduction to a *Book on human Proportion*, by the same Durer :—“He not only understood principles and knew how to apply them in practice, but he was able to set them forth in words.” Well, this Albrecht Durer, the great artist of Lutheran proclivities, says to the students of art :—“A Christian would no more be led to superstition by a picture or an effigy than an honest man would be led to commit murder because he carried a weapon by his side. He must be an unthinking man who would worship picture, wood, or stone. A picture therefore brings more good than harm when it is honourably, artistically, and well made.” I commend the last five words to the consideration of those who contemplate beautifying their churches. Old Nürenberg was full of image breakers, one reads, and Durer himself was unconsciously a paradoxical ally. Thus is art and religion so inextricably



blended that when one attempts to sever them it is only through a rupture as shocking as that which separates religion from morality. But he who, with the misguided zeal of a fanatic, destroys an image of merit, or an image representing the merits of another, is a saint compared with him who consciously truckles to, and sets up a trade upon, the craving of an emerging class, who try to see in the vapid a spiritual significance, in the garish paint of a "Gothic" station the noble elements of ecclesiastical decoration, and in the namby-pamby the simplicity of a master.

## ABOUT PULPITS, TRADESMEN AND ARTISTS.

IF a large congregation of people are to be addressed it is necessary for effective preaching that the pulpit and its occupant be seen, and the latter be heard by all, or the greater number of the people. It must, therefore be raised for this purpose in a conspicuous position, and being raised it must have something to support it, and something by which it may be approached, or ascended, and something also around it to prevent the preacher from either falling out, or, as it may happen with an aged prelate, becoming fatigued through want of a leaning place, such as a balustrade affords. These are trite, self-evident statements, as self-evident as if one said that a house must have a roof to keep the rain out ; and if it be added that a pulpit should be sufficiently commodious to allow of oratorical action, and that, in large churches, there should be a sounding-board, or canopy, above it to economise vocal effort, all the evolved essentials of construction regarding pulpits have been stated.

But there is another and a more elementary matter affecting pulpits which is, to the artist as well as to the average man of good taste, more important to the eye than those already specified. A pulpit, being itself the place where the beauties of the Christian Gospel are elaborated, should have its parts of beauty, it should be one of the concentrated

beauty spots of the Church, not necessarily elaborate itself, or costly beyond appraisement (like the Gospel), but be beautiful as all else in God's House should be. Even as, for that matter, indeed, the discourse issuing therefrom should be sincerely beautiful, however it may depart in style from these masterpieces of diction upon which it is generally founded. Here, then, is the amended proposition, that there be a beautiful base supporting a beautiful rostrum, approached by beautiful steps or way, protected by a beautiful rail, or guard, and over all, a beautiful canopy to reverberate beautiful sounds, and (outside of beauty) be more commodious than a pill-box.

Facts about the beauty of pulpits were grasped and insisted upon by the sculptors of that really religious period before tubs and conventicles and little Bethels divorced for a long period fine art from religion in England, and before vulgar display and decayed taste overwhelmed stateliness and grace in Italy, and long before, maybe (for it is hard to believe otherwise, though examples have disappeared) the modern Gothicism came with his competitive "cheap line" in pulpits and other ecclesiastical stock-in-trade in Ireland. For representative and thoroughly sculpturesque pulpitry the Italy of the thirteenth and two succeeding centuries is the country that furnishes us with the best examples, and because it is a comparatively easy matter for any person interested in art to visit the pre-Reformation pulpits of England and

any others of merit, and of later date in the British Islands, I have chosen a few Italian examples to serve as a basis for this short essay, and to simplify points of emphasis. For, after all, it is not a question of "Gothic" art, or classic, or Renaissance art; it is a question of effective art simply, and the so-called "Gothic" artist of the thirteenth century in England was as great an artist in his own way as the Lombard, or Pisan, or Byzantine, in his. The writer has no prejudice against "Gothic" art, but we have had so much bad art labelled "Gothic" in this country that the choice of something removed from it in feeling leaves the mind free to dwell on beautiful detail with less of a chance of being misunderstood. Modern Gothicism in pulpits, as in other things, was at its best a sham art spirit rather than a bad spirit, a mere Pepper's Ghost thrown across the Irish Sea from a hidden mirror of finer unoriginality.

About pulpits in general, there was a time when pulpits were common in the open air—the time that has been called mediæval—the "dark ages"—when "bad monks" taught the people the true path to a heaven your later Covenanters or your Independents wanted none of. These excellent gentlemen probably preferred an earthly paradise, with tubs and hymn books, and a few bloody noses for those who could not sing their canticles through them. Latin through the nose may be bad enough, but the English language! that is an abomination almost as bad as the hee-haw of the Irish shoneen

of to-day. Then there seemed to be, what a modern trade sculptor would term, a boom in pulpits, in Elizabeth's and in James the First's time, for every church, big and small, was compelled to erect one. [And one had to pay twenty pounds every time he did not go to listen to the parson in the nearest pulpit turn the Apocalypse inside out and upside down, pausing anon for breath at the word Popery, which one might suppose was to be found therein at the tail of every versicle.] Now the Gospel side of the altar is to be preferred to an indifferent pulpit, and, for that matter, many have been the great sermons preached from the elevated predella of an altar by bishop or priest ; but now that Dublin has become, or is becoming fast, the centre of the most flourishing pulpit and altar *trade* the world has ever seen, sermons from the altar are becoming rarer every day. But the open-air pulpit, if that ever come again, let us hope the flourishing tradesmen will leave it quietly alone, or, by that time, that they will have all retired from business and repented of their misdeeds ; those that newspaper puffery has not swollen to death prematurely.

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From an ecclesiastical point of view, pulpits (whether outside or inside) are of less importance than altars or baptismal fonts—that is, so far as their utility to ritual is concerned ; but from the standpoint of art, the pulpit by its position in the nave, is a very important object. It should not be an elevated and magnified baptismal font, like the

greater part of the modern "Gothic" ones, where the preacher always seems standing waist high in water, as we may see in old prints of the baptism of Clovis and other early catechumens at the point of regeneration. If one compares these fonts and pulpits, one may note how the general outline is repeated, like the features of a mother in her son; and (because the font is generally erected in the church before the pulpit) one wonders how big a son could have sprung from so small a mother.

A marble, a stone, or a bronze rostrum, from which words of instruction, interpretation, denunciation, or appeal, are to flow forth, to return, as they should, in timed and modulated echo to the attentive ear of the master preacher—this place of sacred fearlessness, more or less isolated like the mood of its occupant, should be fittingly adorned like the speech, however simple, that issues therefrom. Seldom among modern pulpits in Catholic Ireland do we find anything beyond the octagonal font-shape, with a saint at each corner or in each of the canopied panels. Art, not the adjunct or the helper, a friend or a subtle power recognised and allowed, but shop "art," as the master and disturber of thought, that is what we find. Strive, however one may with open eyes, to fix them upon the speaker, they must at times stray to the pulpit beneath. In that straying who shall say what thoughts our men of commerce are responsible for? And a thought once thought is a thought for ever. Thoughts, maybe of joy or sorrow, peace, regret, or

turmoil ; but good church art, it is certain (and it could be argued at length), will set up no fresh thoughts of anger or evil. To any man of taste or knowledge there is but one thing to do—to close his eyes before the pulpit ; and if the nearest of the congregation do not judge him asleep there is more charity on earth than ever actual sleeper dreamed of.

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Yes, let us close our eyes before those red or yellow marble shafts, cut off in lengths to suit any height, with their foliated capitals, the common stock of every monumental shop in the land. Are they not to be seen on nearly every altar, pulpit, or baptismal font erected of late in this country ; nay, beneath niches, high up on walls, meaning nothing, teaching nothing, decorating nothing ? The pattern in stone has reached wheel-windows now, and we have it upside down consequently, and unavoidably, and it looks better in stone, upside down ; but then under no other conditions could this stock ornament look well at all. Not that it looks well even as a spoke in a wheel-window. It is also common to the porches of ultra-respectable suburban villas with “ Gothic ” porches. The self-same columns are to be seen on the facades of public-houses. If there is a juster example of commercial sameness, and poverty of design—nay, evasion of design—I do not know it. This stock support for everything architectural, from public-houses to pulpits, is it not evidence of cheap and callous indifference to the special demands

of situation or time? You will see these things displayed in sections in shop windows, ready, of all length and magnitudes, for any church that may be projected. These come of tradesmen's cheap estimates, these come of marble masons and others, who have no aptitude for design, but only an aptitude for competing successfully. These (and all which they typify) come of the unconsideration of design, or of the duplication of feeble and ugly ones. Design is the very first thing that should be considered, the very thing that should be well paid for. Any clever tradesman can carve a pulpit, but nobody but an artist can design a beautiful one which shall be truly characteristic of himself as well as of his religion and knowledge.

There are a few famous pulpits which any student of art makes early acquaintance with, either in casts or illustrations, or in the originals. Now, the Pisan pulpit (not reproduced in this essay), with the incomparable Baptistry dome above, throwing gently back, as it does, the human voice in rich blended chords like those of a distant organ, such a pulpit is hardly an ideal rostrum for loud-tongued oratory. With Niccola's reliefs and columns before the eyes and melody above, around, a veritable bath of music drowning the congregation, the deeper truths might be too sensibly battling weakly with conquering emotion. Such a pulpit as this at Pisa, like that other more magnificent one at Siena, also by Niccola Pisano, seems to serve its purpose better indeed unoccupied, for it is truly a silent sermon in



itself. Voicelessly stirring the soul to praise, it overwhelms, through the eyes alone. As a perfect platform, where the priest and his words shall predominate, they fail, these pulpits of the Pisan, by their lavish magnificence of structure. In the Siena Duomo pulpit one can hardly imagine anything except an Apostolic Benediction intoned by a crosiered and mitred Archbishop proceeding therefrom. But if we consider one of the smaller pulpits of Florence, say that one at San Miniato on the hill, or the one in Santa Croce, or, a better example still, the one in the *interior* of the small cathedral at Prato, we shall find that, with the absence of magnificent display, there is something better in pulpit art. There is for the eye that quiet satisfaction, from which proceeds unconflicting joys, thereafter to fill the retrospective mind with visual melody.

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For interesting and satisfying decorative art is never extreme, and never mean. It verges toward the magnificent, or toward the simple, suggesting a restraining will on the part of the artist. And in the best of Lombardic and Tuscan work we find it exemplified. It reached its most fittingly exemplary point (this pulpit sculpture) in that splendid *outside* one at Prato, from which the girdle of Our Lady is exhibited to the people. As in the painting, so in the sculpture of these Lombards and Tuscans, we detect religious progression. The Church had

developed more visibly faster and faster as great men arose, increased and spoke, thought, worked and died. The seed had become a mighty tree bursting into blossom ; nay, a vast miraculous tree soon to yield ripe fruit of every kind in art. These workers in Pisa and Siena, and Florence and Milan, lived like artists and craftsmen, and men of Catholic faith. It is nothing, in this connection, that we hap on a licentious painter or a braggart of a sculptor. Such have been and such may continue to be. But patrons, not painters, society schemers, not sculptors, rise proportionally in their multitude beside the flaming fire of passion ; the others by units. Therefore, about religious progression and religious convictions in art, note that your risky biographical anecdote is but an universal one at its worst. So when we meet with the sneer that a certain great sculptor, or a painter of Madonnas, was hardly a saint himself, we may retort that great saints themselves have done unsaintly things at times. For an artist is a man whose working life is more subject to the control of his senses than any other, and the marvel is that he is, so very often, such a standing reproach to those who in the suspicious evil of their hearts have slandered him ; but, virtuous as a class or not, it is rightly that the Church has called one of them Blessed when she found in him hardly a spot or stain.

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But the life of a modern tradesman is hardly the

life of any artist, ethically good or bad. It is true that the modern tradesman, differing from the great artists of bygone periods, has been known to take unto himself a pride, founded upon some extraordinary ability to sculp "Gothic" figures without the use of a model. He has been known to speak contemptuously of those erratic men who, like the mere Egyptians, Greeks, Germans, Italians, French, and English—deemed an unending study of the life imperative to vigorous results; for he, this tradesman in Ireland, he is above such commonplace necessities as a living model. Do not thirteenth century "Gothic," and other figures spring into a parody of semblance under his hand like a cuckoo on a Swiss clock? He alone can rush in where the Pisani and Benedetto da Majano and Donatello feared to tread? Yet, for all his contempt of that which the great ones deemed necessary for successful art, the modern tradesman may admit that marble figures like either of those children on the Marsuppini tomb in Santa Croce, Florence, by Desiderio da Settignano\*) and Donatello's St. John the Baptist, standing on its pedestal in the Bargello, has just a few points worthy of imitation, if not of study. Truly, the "drapery" upon the latter is hardly "Gothic," and the limbs do not appear to have been made of wood, or putty, yet the modern tradesman who pays a yearly premium on a plate-glass policy may admit that poor Donatello, who

\* See a cast of this monument in the Dublin Museum. That is why I have referred to it here.

was obliged to study from the life, knew thereby just a little of human anatomy.\*

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Well, the sooner these "Gothic" saints cease appearing on our pulpits the better. The men who carve them cannot have felt they were (by them) expressing anything noble about art, or humanity, or religion. And, if they ever feel at all, they seem devoid of the ability, or the inclination, or the opportunity, to express that feeling in terms of art. But it is not so-called realism, however close to nature, that makes for vigour and expression, and for interest above all. If it were so, then the master-pieces of Michael Angelo himself were failures as sculpture. But the artist must find some natural truth to tell, and be able to tell it (or some interesting part of it) with sincerity and ability. If a tradesman find no truth to tell, and have been moved to feel nothing, he can at best be but a skilful and mechanical copyist of details. When the tradesman is a poor shuffler of details as well as a poor imitator, setting up as an "artist" himself by an attempted translating, say, of the pictorial works of the old painters into modern low-reliefs, he proves himself to be just a trader in the creations of another, without any feeling at all for the sculpturesque as distinguished from the pictorial. And the sculpturesque and the

\* Father Marchese, the Dominican, has a note of regret in his book, that Sister Plautilla (the nun and Dominican painter) should have been debarred from studying "as men do, from the life." I quote from the Rev. C. P. Meehan's translation.

pictorial are as far apart as are the brush and the chisel, canvas and clay.\*

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Well, neither pulpits nor anything else, profusely decorated or plainly undecorated, will be beautiful so long as their production is left in the hands of the ecclesiastical tradesmen. Commercial competition usually prevents him from employing artists of any reputation, and few young men of talent would submit to the terms of a tradesman. To employ mechanics, more or less skilled, an art-school pupil, or two, as apprentices (who leave him if they show talent), this will enable him to carry out as cheaply as possible his "designs," or his borrowed pictures. In the bulk, the name of tradesman will, no doubt, continue to associate itself with all that is inartistically vile, whether in pulpits or in any other kind of sculpture.

And the shame of it! For, once upon a time, there were enthusiastic craftsmen plying their art in workshops under masters of talent, though all workmen were not "artists," to be sure, when Benedetto kept his shop in the Via de' Servi. That is one of our benefactions from the hand of "progress," that the tradesman should inherit

\* I was thinking of the attempted reproductions in relief of Leonardo's "Last Supper" when I wrote this. But this fashion of translating painting into sculpture, and even sculpture into Mosaic, seems to be growing apace, and is evoking tributes of praise in the press! Stained glass windows are also being admired, because they "look like pictures"! See essay on Stained Glass.

the prestige of the artist. The shame of it, whatever among the generations be responsible for it ! And the pity of it, when art and religion are so closely united that objectively they seem almost one. The pity of it, that tradesmen should have the art of this country under their usurping heels ! And that objective religion should itself rejoice to be tied to the shoelace of commercialism !





DESIGN FOR FONT, LOUGHREA CATHEDRAL.  
(BY MICHAEL SHORTALL.)

[To face page 191.]



## THE IRISH BLACKSMITH AS AN ARTIST.

PERHAPS, I should have written the "Irish Blacksmith as an Artificer," but I don't wish to impose a squabble on myself about the words of my self-chosen text. The time was when the worker in iron, who was just a blacksmith, a hammerer of steel and iron—the time was when he was undoubtedly an artist; when he designed and made things as beautiful as the conditions of their service in peace, or in war, permitted him. In other lands, notably in France, Flanders, and Germany, he was a great artist, this blacksmith, as numbers of fine examples of his craft, still defying rust, conclusively prove. The smith, as a hammering man in the arts of war, gradually fell away from the needs of his patrons as cannons and muskets came into being; and as a worker in the arts of peace, as machinery generally, and the casting of iron ornamental detail in particular, invaded the purview of his smithy. The shoeing of horses remained to him, and the shaping of an occasional pikehead, and the odd jobs of an agricultural countryside. To-day, in Ireland, at least, the original and primal blacksmith, when not just a shoer of horses, a farrier simplex, is at the most a rivetter together of machine made iron bars into uninteresting gates, or rails; his art carries him no further into the courts of everlasting beauty.

Now why should this be? Let one remember the number of churches lately erected in this country; let one think of the number of churches still needed; and then let one consider the place of smithery in the economy of church adornment—nay, church requirement.

The gold and silver smith have their place in the tabernacle and in the service of the altar generally—or, at least, what are now termed gold and silver smiths have—but how far has the hammerer and twister of iron been patronised. It is true we may sometimes hap on a “wrought-iron” screen, or a grill, dividing a chapel from a nave, but the stamp of machine-divided labour is upon it, the blacksmith, as a man with hands of his own, is seldom, or never, evident in the little we find. For that is the evidence we search for—or should—the undoubted signs that the hand has worked upon the iron.

In the face of this expressed general fruitlessness of search, I feel more than glad to testify that, lately one evening in a remote country part, where if not under “a spreading chestnut tree,” yet in the seclusion of a turn-off the high road, miles from any town, I found a busy smithy, with several bare-armed Irishmen, hammering away at a grilled railing for a church,\* that promises to be a work of art, as restrainedly sincere as any-

\* For the cathedral at Loughrea, where the Bishop of Clonfert is at present setting a sensible example to the whole country, by employing artists, and craftsmen, of acknowledged merit.

thing of its kind in the past history of the blacksmith's art. Not "under a spreading chestnut tree," but beeches autumnally turning to russet and orange, all afire in the setting sun, fringed the highway; and a thatch still held reproachfully its place in the economy of a landscape mainly pastoral—sole token of agriculture in a country that has been robbed of it by the near-sighted grazier.

I have written "restrainedly sincere," and I will explain why I levy the term in such a service as that of the forge; because what is wanted in the arts of this country (and I care about no other, except to point a moral) is an elimination of the affected and of the unnecessary. We want nothing that pretends to be something which it is not; no mosaics praisedly "mistaken for oil paintings" such is the way to the stars in a church I have read of; no stained glass like transparent "pictures," and no wrought iron emulating castings, however fit a casting may be in another place. We want the work of the hand to be emphasized by the hand, because it is the work of the hand; and because half the truth and beauty of anything lies in method of creation being discernible its True art is not more to conceal art than to exhibit itself as art.

And this is my explanation of the term "restrainedly sincere," which I use in relation to this work which I saw in progress the other day in Ireland. The man—the master smith him-

self—was restrainedly sincere in his manner as well as in his work ; he was not the self-sufficient man that we are constantly meeting in the large cities of competition. This man would rather leave the marks of his hammer than file them off ; not because it would be less labour, but because he had confidence in the designer who did not demand such “finish.” He would rather see the variety that comes of the nature of the manual labour than unrestrainedly go on twisting, and filing, and mechanically measuring to make all one concretion of sameness. He is not a designer himself, but a worker—an artificer—and when he is given a design he may be trusted to put the pulsating life of his hammer arm into every detail.

And would it not be interesting if in all the arts we could find this personality of the labourer himself, expressed in such shades of variety which cannot upset the balance of the whole, judged wholly ? For, mind you, in any art an irregularity that comes of its *manu*-facture was never yet a defect, but an inherent beauty, that is revealed in the creating of its form. And an attempted smoothing of something already fine into something else which may be fine (or not) for other purposes, but not for the purpose it has here to fulfil, is labour lost, because misapplied or unwanted. Others have said as much in other countries and in other ways, and I am only repeating and insisting on a well-known canon of art ; but what I have not yet read, or

heard of, is that we must look to our Irish country blacksmiths—the more removed from the big cities the better—if we want fine wrought-iron work in the Church, or, for that matter, at the Hearth. They may not have studied design in a school of “art”—and design is the initial necessity for fine work—but as artificers, as artists in their love of their medium, I have little fear that there are many of them who could not carry out a design in an honest manner. And provided always that they be gently complimented for their honest hammering, so that some of the shame they may feel for their hammers and pincers become obliterated. We want no such apologies as—“Faith it is a bit uneven, but I’ll rub it down with the rasp,” or—“I could give it a bit more of a twist and take the back out of that scroll, so’s it’ll *match* the other exactly.” No, we want the regularity of balance, but we do not want exact uniformity of unliving detail; and we want the man who knows when to stop. And by the same token, we do not want inside a church wrought-iron that is coated with paint.

Indeed, do we not want more of this life of the nery constructive hand—in iron work and in much else—and how shall we have it with us if its evidences be unwisely removed?\*

The most skilful working in many a medium, imposes difficulties; but these very difficulties are in themselves

\* Consider a hammered silver tea-pot, polished until it looks like glass above quicksilver. How one wishes for the evidence of the final hammer marks, *however delicate*, in a beaten up shape.

generators of beauties, Evidences of those difficulties, and of their overcoming as far as the restraining hand permits, must remain, not be sandpapered into oblivion ; but the beautiful life in many a work of art consists in those difficulties being acknowledged and loved for themselves, and in not being purposely (and yet purposelessly) eliminated. For vigour postulates life.

So the hand must restrain itself, must be taught restraint. We want the vigorous regularity of the constructive tool, not the weak uniformity of the oblitative ones. In the man at the forge we want restrained sincerity ; and without that we indeed have not any art at its best, any artist or artificer at his best shewing ; at his indicative power and intentional reserve.

## ON STAINED GLASS.

THE writer has many reasons for believing and for knowing that what may be said about stained glass in Catholic Dublin might be said fairly of most modern church windows in Ireland. For, in this respect, Dublin is representative ; it has sent windows to country places, and also some glass to more distant sanctuaries of the Faith ; and has, in its turn, received many from the same outside sources that have supplied country churches with the majority of their windows.

In approaching such an essay as this, one's heart has to struggle against despondency at first. From church to church the writer has journeyed with hope, and even with trust, after some friendly recommendation, but only to be disappointed, and sometimes a little irritated, at the innocent deception practised upon the seeker for materialised beauty. It is, indeed, a pity that nice, clean, plain white glass, letting in the wholesome and radiant light of heaven, should have been hastily removed in newly-erected churches to make way for garish pictures. It was done, no doubt, with a good intention, but excellent intention in a matter like this is a poor excuse for hasty perpetration.

If, during the last few years, there has been some improvement, notably in colour, there is still a long road for the stained glass man in Ireland to travel

before he can produce anything that any artist of repute or knowledge can say is well and irreproachably done. Or, as a manufacturer, he may simply take a shorter cut, and engage better men straight away to design his windows ; but this, unless the Irish figure-painter with inclinations sets to and learns the craft upon due encouragement, must lead to an importation or two. There is no other way. Church windows must be designed by artists and by nobody else,—however excellent their technical knowledge,—if such windows are to be the lasting expression of beautiful thoughts ; and designed by artists, trained in the craft, carefully superintending, if not actually performing, every detail of the “ eighteen processes,” from the coloured sketch to the erection of the finished window.\*

The improvement referred to, which is willingly remembered and perhaps over-estimated, should

\* Here are a few words from Mr. Holiday's book, *Stained Glass as an Art*, the best book, so far, that I have seen on the art :—“ The artist should be thinking of the work as glass from first to last, and the various structural essentials proper to the material, should not only be present to his mind, but should form a part of his design.” . . . “ The painter of a stained glass window is, in fact, to the designer, what the pianist or violinist is to the composer of the sonata.” . . . “ The painter must be an expert draughtsman ; indeed, he should be an artist in every sense of the word, except as regards the creative faculty, since the interpretation of the artist's design depends upon his artistic perception, and his accuracy of eye and hand.” (For my part I think the “ creative faculty ” is necessary in some degree for an artist in glass, even though the design be by another. In sculpture, the clever carver or bronze caster can reproduce the artist's work exactly ; a carver of statues need but be a skilful mechanic, trusting implicitly to his pointing machine, leaving, perhaps a few final touches for the artist himself. But in stained glass the craftsman is translating, or rendering, and thus, in a manner, creating).



surely still keep some hope alive—some hope of really artistic things in the future—to remain and put an end to an otherwise reasonable cynicism. And, before the writer refers to examples, it may be fitting to say a word in general on the art. Historical summaries are of little importance from the point of view of this essay, and now-a-days we have too much art history altogether ; and its influence on criticism has been anything but desirable. The historico-art critic is usually somebody that knows more about the history than the art. If one has seen, say, the windows of St. Denis \* and La Sainte Chapelle, and

\* In these days of cheap travel probably, most parish priests, however slight their leisure, however slender their resources, have passed through Paris and have found time for La Sainte Chapelle and St. Denis. For those who have not been to the latter mutilated edifice, I subjoin an extract from *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 2, 1893 :—"The artists employed in making the windows for the Abbot Suger used very little paint, but followed a mosaic motif as far as they could, the glass of the time materially helping them to that end, as it was unequal in colour and transparency, irregular in surface and texture, which made it more adaptable to mosaic effects than the more perfectly made glass of a later date. At the same time these so-called 'defects' increased the richness and gave a gem-like colour to the glass. They used paint only in the flesh in outlining the figures and ornaments, and where they needed a line it was made of strong brown, and the shading was done by cross hatching, or by a thin wash of brown. When they wished to deepen the shadow they did not paint over the first application, but on the opposite side of the glass. They made their diaper patterns by smearing the surface of the glass with a colour, and scraping the design through the paint to the glass. The faces, hands, and naked parts of the figures were made with flesh-coloured glass, excepting the eyes, which were often painted on white, and leaded into the face ; the beard and hair were made of small pieces of coloured glass ; the figures were badly proportioned," etc., etc. Some modern stained glass craftsmen have imitated Abbot Suger's workmen in one particular ; that one referred to in the last five words of the quotation. (Chartres, and Florence, *must* be included in the itinerary of the student.)

a few others here and there in Continental churches and in some English churches, and dislocated examples such as that one recently acquired by the South Kensington Museum—a window by Fra Guglielmo of Marseilles—he may feel quite certain that the best examples of modern glass are quite equal to the best of the mediæval artist, and in design sometimes superior. But the *best* of modern glass is not to be found in Munichised Dublin, nor hardly anywhere in Ireland as yet. The only thing the writer cares to remember about the history of the art is this saying of the middle ages : that, “in order to make a gentleman” glass-maker, you must first take a gentleman. But the Normans, who are here referred to, were seldom gentlemen ; they were but polite bandits, and they have left in Ireland characteristic descendants.

But what should a stained glass window be, to be a work of art ? When Sir Joshua Reynolds designed a window at Oxford, it was certainly the design of a great artist, but the window is a failure. It is a failure because he attempted too much and did too little. He designed a beautiful picture for glass, and left it to be carried out in enamel colours by indifferent workmen. It is neither a picture nor decoration ; it is a freak of art, in which there is no refulgence, no fine glow nor brilliancy, nor lucid depth. In any case, without the defects of execution, the result would have been a failure, for the most beautiful picture in the world, if translated into glass, stands to be judged as window decoration, and judgment falls

heavily upon it. As well might, and with more consideration, an oil painting by Rembrandt be copied in inlaid woods, and be judged accordingly.

That window is something that a window should *not* be. In Dublin there is little of what may be strictly termed pictorial work, but much of semi-pictorial work. Neither transparent pictures nor flat designs. But there is much worse, there is sham mediævalism. For another thing, which a stained glass window should not be, is an imitation chromo-lithograph of a mediæval panelled saint, which has none of the reproductive utility of a lithograph, and none of the translucent charm of pre-reformation glass. Its garish crudity is greatly more offensive than the semi-pictorial effects of equally purposeless window-painting. No, these windows are certainly not what stained glass should be. Early fifteenth century work was as right as the thirteenth, and as personal in purpose as it was improved in methods. The nineteenth century craftsman, like his immediate predecessors, was, until recently, almost without purpose at all. The century was not limited in outlook ; had it been so, in one sense, it had been well ; but it gave us the sham, imitative, defective work of the commercial exploiter with an oily tongue and an ever-ready kiln. His object was to save expense, and to compete successfully. He avoided lead in a window as much as possible—one of a window's chief charms, for it comes of its own beautiful limitations, and emphasizes form. His saddle-bars did not trouble him,

so long as they supported his window ; he would let them come anywhere in the design. Nay, he sometimes left in the diamond leading of the plain window reckless of any incongruity, and he had Gothic canopies for his saints to suit any style of church with pointed windows and a pinnacle or two. As a sagacious commercial man he was not to blame ; as a stained glass maker he was contemptible ; as an artist he was simply nothing at all. His work, conspicuous in Ireland, is certainly not what ecclesiastical stained glass should be.

It is impossible, on technical grounds, to imitate the effects of nature in stained glass: the distinctive character of the material prohibits it. And it would not be the highest thing obtainable could such effects be obtained. The beauty of the chief material, glass, is a beauty that claims refulgency, translucency, depth, and the subtle gradation come of variable thickness as some of its special characteristics and some accidentals of colour, to be wisely used by the true artist, as of lesser, yet important, note. The beauty, also, of a subsidiary material, lead in thin strips, is drawn out from that material when those strips are made to express form ; to enhance it, and not to obscure it, nor to ignore it. They should always be lovingly insisted upon, even where they could be dispensed with on economical grounds, if a contour allows it, or pattern seems to require it. Another subsidiary material is the plain and generally straight iron of the saddle-bars. These divide the lights into many parts, and if they are arranged

wisely (as in the French cathedral at Chartres and in La Sainte Chappelle), they can be made to subserve certain features, in themselves beautiful, such as an harmonious geometrical arrangement of panels. All these factors in material cannot be got away with, even were it desirable. The more they are insisted upon, loved, made much of, the more beautiful the result ; the less they are made use of, the less satisfactory the result. A stained glass window should be something with all these characters duly honoured.

But it should be something more. It should be decoration ; and decoration of a flat, translucent ground. If it is not decorative it is nothing as a window. What seem defects to the inæsthetic eye are often admirable indications of perfection to that of the more discerning. The general tendency of the "Victorian" age, the apex of Hanoverianism, was to turn applied art topsy-turvey, as well as much of what is called fine art. In this connection we may term stained glass an applied fine art ; though in reality there is but art, of which this particular branch is a manifestation. But in early Victorian days, a chess board that folded up into a Shakespeare in two volumes was held to be a masterpiece of minor domestic art ; and not necessarily (for it was an age of compromise) because it could secrete a maturing box of cigars or a bottle of special whiskey ; but chiefly because its artificer had cleverly made it to resemble something it was not. Large china plates which would have cheerfully held all kinds of eatables if left in horizontal unimbellished peace, were

decorated with crude landscapes by young ladies, then framed in plush, and hung on drawingroom walls ! They were then termed plaques ; and presumably the term was held to have ennobled their efforts. As a matter of fact, a platter, useful for holding a cold ham clear of the table, was often converted into the most useless, and the ugliest, object in the house. A like misuse of material had crept into everything, and it is only in recent years that England has girded her loins to undo all the mischief she was perpetrating, and which Germany willingly fostered. Happily in stained glass and in other mediums the tendency of to-day (there) is toward a better appreciation of the exclusive character of the material employed. That tendency is barely perceptible in Dublin.

Any appreciation subject to the inherent limitations of material, is seldom apparent. Stained glass windows are often almost the reverse of what windows should be. And this, apart from the ecclesiastical consideration, which ought to be special, and for special purposes ; and which, seldom ignored though it be, is mostly borrowed from bygone ages—ages themselves more truly introspectively retrospective than our own. For introspection begets the true retrospection ; and to borrow the retrospection of the past is to play the perennial ape. And scores of Dublin church windows are but the work of a more or less skilful apery.

The stained glass craftsmen, in Ireland, as well

as other art craftsmen, need first to subdue some of their self-sufficiency. There are tone engravers in Ireland who know nothing about tone ; and there are stained glass manufacturers who seem to know less about stained glass. That is, tone engraving as a reproductive art, and glass as a fine original one. One must be explicit these times. For despite the late improvement in the colour and quality of the glass, the designing and general outlook of the craft is much the same as it was twenty commercial years ago. Now, "commercial aptitude" as it has been termed, is a good thing in itself ; but where it hypocritically deadens art, or remorselessly sacrifices art on the altar of its ledger account, or helps to bury art in the strong room of a bank, it stands impeached, tried, and condemned by its unfeeling usurpation of the name of the victim it has slain. Yet your commercial "art" firm is the first to insist on the name of art. And this cold-blooded, unfeeling commercialism,\* in a country supposed to be saturated with warm-watery sentiment, is very conspicuous when we come to examine its ecclesiastical art ; its statuary, sculptural features, architecture in general, painting, and stained glass in particular.

There are many windows in Dublin by a firm whose headquarters appear to be in Munich. In their later windows this firm now imitate a style,

\* But commercialism has no compunction anywhere apparently. Not only in fine old English Cathedrals like Canterbury, but in Italy itself, in churches like Santa Trinita at Florence (*e.g.*), it is evident. There is a modern restoration there of a two light window that would disgrace any church in Ireland.

common in England, which succeeded the sham mediævalism of thirty years and more ago. This style is certainly preferable to sham mediævalism, but surely if church authorities want it, why not get some imitative Irish firm to do the work. To my thinking, trying to look at things for a moment from a commercial point of view, it was sending money out of the country for bad glass, when just as bad could have been got at home on as reasonable terms, or on more self-righteous terms at any rate. But, seriously, one may ask here, as elsewhere, why should authorities be so impatient about adorning newly-erected sanctuaries? For never was impatience more visibly exhibited by those who should be exemplars of architectonic longanimity. Having imitative windows, with imitative mullions and imitative tracery, they were on thorns of desire until they filled them up with equally imitative glass. They rushed to Munich, or to France, or to London, instead of abiding in peaceful expectancy.

For, though they went to Munich, they did worse in going to France, and almost as badly in going to England. The Dominicans, years ago, went to London, and to a man with an Irish name, for their large five apsidal windows behind their high altar. Some of the lead and saddle-bars in these windows would disgrace an otherwise fine scheme, if this were such; which, indeed, it is far from being. As for colour, it is not a whit more translucent than the horrid, crude, opacity of some of the windows at



St. Teresa's, Clarendon Street ; at St. Joseph's, Dalkey (over high altar) ; at the Parish Church Blackrock (over high altar) ; at St. James's, James's Street ; at St. Michan's, Halston Street, and elsewhere ; and nearly everything in it, when judged by the standard referred to briefly in a preceding paragraph, is to be condemned as poor, misapplied art. When they went to France, as they did for the windows at Rathfarnham, they got something for their money (much or little, whatever it may be), something, which nothing in Great Britain or Ireland can equal as downright trash. They must really be the worst windows in the world. There cannot be anything in window decoration, not even paper imitations, worse than these.

A good many older windows (though all under review are modern of course), appear to have been painted in enamel colours ; they transmit no radiance from the sky whatever ; and we find rubies blackened and hideous ; yellows like chilled pea soup, and as refulgent ; purples like plum juice on a dirty tablecloth, and as transparent ; greens and blues like those on the most screeching of British posters. In the sanctuary of St. Nicholas, in Francis Street ; in the large window of the Augustinian Church in Thomas Street ; in the nave of the church in Halston Street ; in St. James's ; in the side windows of St. Patrick's, Monkstown, just for examples, one may detect all the tones of these colours that should never be sounded in stained glass. Once seen they can never be forgotten, like railway collisions, battle

fields, and dissecting rooms, however we may wish to obliterate the unpleasant memories of permitted horrors.

These things are not the work of artists ; that is the reason of their failure. Here is a truism, which I have extracted from a book by a stained-glass artist, and though it is a platitude, and a well-worn platitude to the artist, it is worth quoting. It is from Holiday's book \* on the art :—" The average public is still too ignorant to understand that works of art must be the works of artists. When will fairly educated members of society learn that we cannot gather grapes from thorns, figs from thistles, nor art from tradesmen ? " That was written in 1896, though Holiday, treading the pathway opened by Morris and others, had made a distinct departure in ecclesiastical stained glass years before. I commend his book to all the priests of Ireland, as one of the few books on art worth reading. And there are few very few (out of the many on sale by enterprising publishers) even worth looking at. This man, Holiday, *did* know what he was writing about.

Hardly anywhere in Catholic Dublin do we find the work of the unquestionable artist, or, indeed, of the passable artist, who is also a stained-glass craftsman. Take light and shade, as in some of the side windows at St. Joseph's, Dalkey, or in one of the windows at St. Nicholas, in Francis Street

\* *Stained Glass as an Art*, by Henry Holiday, referred to in a previous footnote.

(Vision of St. Margaret Mary). *Pictorial!* force, we find, but the inherent beauty of the material ignored, or, at least, undervalued. Take the Assumption window at St. Teresa's, Clarendon Street, or the comparatively superior window of the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Dolphin's Barn, and then let the critical observer, who has seen pot-metal made some artistic use of, shudder and turn away.

One might confine an article, such as this, entirely to colour ; for colour is that characteristic of stained glass which immediately reveals itself to the beholder. If the colour, at the first comprehensive glance, does not produce an unmixed and pleasurable sensation, the total effort is, to a great extent, wasted. Other beauties of important detail, more slowly revealing themselves, will hardly compensate for the initial impression of failure. But colour, though of primary importance for immediate effect, is not all ; nor paradoxical as it may seem, is it really the principal thing on which a careful judgment should be based. In no other art is the drawing of contours so emphasized by the character of the work, and in no other work is the general design so hampered, or, at least, so dictated, by the restrictions of the architectural features surrounding it. As Holiday himself says truly enough, "we *may* omit the colour, and occasionally this must be done where light has to be economised, but we cannot omit form." There can be no blurred pictorial "impressionism" of the form in stained glass ; the leads will only make the presumptuous work more brazenly audacious, and

more affectedly foolish.\* Not that much of this tendency is observable in Dublin ; but unless the stained glass man love the lead with the true love of the art craftsman he can draw out no true love of his work from the soul of the lover of form in design. In other arts the artist who cannot draw sometimes wriggles out of his difficulty with a few tricks, and may find a clique to adore his tricks ; but in stained glass his material bowls him out every time. In some of the windows, most of them indeed, at St. Teresa's, there are large masses of colour, which divide up the designs into uninteresting patches. The lead is of little account in the Assumption window ; it is, so far as the drawing is concerned, something of a nuisance. It is a wonder that some firms cannot see their way to save the cost of lead altogether, so that they could run up windows at an *ad valorem* reduction in price.

But these are masterpieces compared to the sanctuary windows at St. Nicholas', the nave windows at Halston Street, some windows at St. Joseph's, Berkeley Street, at St. Kevin's, Harrington Street, and one at Kingstown. And as for the drawing in itself, the figures in some of them, as in the St. Thomas À Beckett window in St. Nicholas, are absolutely childish ; and some at Blackrock, in the baptistry, are affectedly grotesque and intentionally erratic.

In the nave of St. Nicholas' there is some little

\* Gradation in the glass itself, and accidentals, are beautiful things. I have referred to this elsewhere.

evidence of better intention, especially in one on the Gospel side, or the left hand of the observer facing the altar. And this intention will be yet more noticeable in two windows shortly to be erected—one of two lights, an “Annunciation,” destined for St. Mary’s, Morehampton Road, and one, a lunette, for St. Audoen’s, High Street, executed by the same firm that did the St. Nicholas’ window. It is a temporary relief to advert upon these at this point, because unpleasant things have yet to be written about before this task be completed.

The smaller window, the one of two lights for St. Mary’s, was completed when seen by the writer, and was placed in a good light. It is, in colour, full of quality and depth, and the whole effect is harmonious. The most that could be made of “antique” and “pot-metal” glass has been attempted, and it distinctly approaches success. The drawing is careful, though in one or two details there is a loss of interest; and the treatment is devotional without being insipid. The darker rubies are, in the writer’s judgment, a little overdone, but the window for the greater part is full of quality. The ornament above and beneath the figures is of the present period—for it imitates no style, no age, and therefore expressed some living and personal idea. Comparatively, it is a good window. In the other window, that destined for St. Audoen’s parish church, an “Immaculate Conception,” a similar progress has been made toward a better appreciation of the true value of stained glass. It will probably be a better window

than the "Annunciation," if it be possible to judge by the two parts examined. It is rarely possible to judge of a window until it is completely finished ; and often, indeed, until it is erected in its place. The colour and arrangement of the angels on either side of the central part give a fair promise of a most successful scheme, though the former remark about the intensity of the rubies, or the shading of them also applies here. And, finally, both the St. Mary's and the St. Audoen's windows must be re-examined in their respective churches before an unerring opinion can be formed of their merits.\*

Pausing yet a little longer on what has seemed worthy of praise, it may be fitting to refer in terms of eulogy to one excellent window for a country church ; or at least in terms of critical appreciation. A stained glass window for Loughrea is at present being executed by a firm, or class, or fraternity, in Dublin, which seems to be filled with the spirit and traditions of the Morris-Burne Jones-Crane Company of religious art. And in many respects a very goodly, undying company it is as a kind of spiritual influence through material channels. The design and a considerable part of the glass work gave the writer great, but not unqualified, pleasure. It also is an "Annunciation." Whether Mr. Whall, who may be now tacked on to the tail end of this undying spiritual company,

\* I have since seen the St. Audoen's window, above the high altar there, and I am disappointed. Yet, comparatively, these two windows are fair enough. One must be thankful even for small mercies at the hands of our tradesmen.

is indeed but a part that has been wagged by the more important body which has wagged scores of other tails in other arts ; or whether he be strong enough, with those who have patronized him, to create an Anglo-Irish body to wag tails here in Ireland, I don't know. But in coloured glass, at least, this class, or community, or firm, or artist, can teach Irishmen something worth learning. I saw a design full of interest ; and I saw some glass that would make the heart beat with delight in response to the chromatic impulse transmitted. And I saw an intelligent, appreciative artist and worker, who knew how to make the most of his colour, and the most of his leads. And there is very little doubt that the window at Loughrea will be the richest bit of refulgent, harmonious colour in modern Ireland. I shall certainly make a point of seeing it when finished and fixed in its place. If there be any danger to art in such importations it lies in the fact that a people, fresh to every beautiful style, that comes, are inclined to adopt the mannerisms of that style, rather than seek to create the spirit that made the style, and of which the mannerisms are its defects.\*

\* Six months after the above was written, I saw two more windows by this stained glass firm, and in an article in the *Leader*, for July 11th, 1903, I said ;—" I think it a matter of simple justice to add to my reference in that article (*i.e.*, the the present one) a few words about another window by them, executed recently for Loughrea Cathedral." About the leading, I said :—" As for the leading of this window, it is as far from reproach as anything in stained glass could well be. It is, in the writer's opinion, as fine a bit of leading as he has seen in any country, and finer than a great deal. The cost of production,

To return to the Dublin churches, there is a little lancet-headed window in the Baptistry at St. Joseph's, Berkeley Street, where form has been more carefully treated, and in two windows in the aisle at Blackrock; but the designs, or the glass itself, call for little notice. But what does deserve the strongest censure is windows such as that in the same parish church at Blackrock, where a whole panel, one-half of a window, is filled with wriggling yellow ribbons, or worms, or dirty macaroni covered with texts that cannot be read. Such things are neither windows nor literary ornament; nor ornament at all. The aisle windows, atrocious in quality, as they are, of the church of Monkstown, are certainly ornamental; and some of the geometrical

the amount of labour, have evidently been of no small import. . . . Here, indeed, we have leading loved and made much of; petted, as it were, and almost spoiled with affection. For, had it been carried much further (and it could have been) the work would have been spoiled by excessive construction. About the quality of glass used in the works of Miss Purser, R.H.A., I have nothing but added praise to offer here. Altogether it is a worthy example of modern glass . . . . good art, sincere art, fine art *despite defects*. For I must confess that I determinedly searched for defects." Further on I said:—"For my part I do not care to know whether it is a firm, a fraternity, a workshop or a venture. But I wish it success. You may rest assured that Munich will soon rise to the occasion and attempt imitation at lower prices. Let patrons be on their guard against such a development; let them, at least, be forewarned, better advised, and more informed on the great distinction between price and value—for we can hardly expect artistic knowledge to grow as rapidly as Munich stained glass. A bad window is dear at any price, and no good window can be cheap in the Munichised manner." There is also some direct criticism of the design of a window in this article (if the reader is interested in technicalities) but I rather think now that my idea of "simple justice" led me to over-praise this particular window. But Miss Purser's windows are the *best* in Ireland, so far.





STAINED GLASS WINDOW.  
 (BY MISS S. PURSER, H.R.H.A., AND MICHAEL HEALY.)

[To face page 214.



designs, etc., are not unpleasant, as such ; but your wriggling macaroni, with letters stuck on it, is simply grotesque. And the grotesque must always be intentional and necessary, or it is ridiculous. Stained church glass is rarely a place for it.

That ubiquitous and business-like Munich firm has tried its imitative best at more appreciative lead work in its later windows, as at Dolphin's Barn, where I have referred to some by Dublin firms which invite no lengthened notice. In the transept window (northern or left hand) the design is as crammed and confused as the Munich window opposite is empty and pictorial. This "Descent of the Holy Ghost" is by the same firm that is doing the St. Audoen's window referred to above, and who did the "Coronation of the Blessed Virgin" window at St. Saviour's, a rather bilious-looking affair, owing possibly to the yellow glass screen on the outer side. The same weak, curly clouds confusing the design, and the same loss of dignity may be observed in the figures. But note, that the Munich windows at Dolphin's Barn carry a more direct (and more regrettably pictorial) impression, because they are full of sharper contrasts and more detached in design. In no other church can the defects of Dublin and Munich be so readily compared ; and if the Munich windows are more brilliant, it is a garish brilliancy, owing to another of the commonest of defects, pale backgrounds of poor quality. And the danger is that the public may grow fond of this cheap kind of

brilliancy, and see nothing in glowing depths of quality ; and that, eventually, a window like that, for instance, over the high altar at Kingstown parish church (executed, it is said, in Dublin), will rank in their thoughts as the ideal in window glass. And from the public is the church to expect its donations and bequests, and not infrequently requests, as to the exact manner of their outlay.

Perhaps, the church whose windows, without exception, show every stage of imitative work at its worst, is St. James's, James's Street. From the large panelled window of saints stereotyped in crudity over the high altar, down each aisle to the main door, this imitation has dogged the steps of every imported style. Pseudo-mediæval and modern, with mullions crossed by figures in total disregard of all decorative sense. In the debased sixteenth century work of Belgium, when art and trade in art were still undivided, there were redeeming qualities that made it interesting. In all such modern work as this there is no interest whatever. The colour gradually loses its crude blues, as it leaves the sanctuary further and further, together with its mediævalism ; but it gains nothing but characteristics equally dispiriting.

It is a thankless as well as a trying task, this seeking for beauty in the Dublin churches, where the vogue gradually stultifies the susceptibilities of the searcher. The daily papers have not done their duty, for a daily paper is supposed to have

a duty to perform, beyond dividend paying and appearing in time to upset one's breakfast. They have puffed poor native productions as they did equally poor importations, and criticism has at length begun to stink in the nostrils of the artist. The public don't know what to like—except the sensation of changing their views once a week—and they don't know why one wretched bit of work is worse than another more wretched bit of work. They have been so often led astray by ignorant scribes, or subserviently puffing critics.

When we get that type of critic what can we expect from his readers ! If the critic's fine imagination is distorted, or his sense of proportion maimed, he should be chary of log-rolling, and he should learn something about art as art in practice and nothing less.

Again, no sooner does some marble mason, or other, stick up his eternal Gothic pinnacle in front of some sanctuary window, and half eclipsing some of its lights, than a scribe can be found to ring all the changes on it as a magnificent masterpiece of native art ! “Poor Ireland,” as a sculptor said, after reading one of these “critiques” ; and we may well say “Poor Ireland” ; when “criticism,” such as this has begun to stink in the nostrils of every honest judge of art work.

To be sure, let us recognise a Jean François Millet in *painting*, a Benedetto da Majano in *sculpture*, or even a Jean Cousin in stained glass work, when he comes ; but let us be honestly com-

petent to discern both a false craftsman (or a false prophet) from a true one. Let our Abbot Sugers of to-day know what their St. Denis ought to look like when they begin to erect windows, and to plan altars, and to order modern Stations of the Cross, and do what old Abbot Suger did so sensibly—only employ the best artists obtainable. As it is, many of the best men emigrate, the indifferent hang on to perpetuate mediocrity, and the worst return and compete with the indifferent for the palm of puffery.

Importation is sometimes made a necessity. But why foreign importations in stained glass should oust, on the whole, not inferior native work, and often better, is a mystery, except on the hypothesis of price. . . . But here is another consideration. If a manufacturer adheres to certain methods of production, knowing full well that those methods are the very means for keeping his work on a higher level than if he gave them up for money saving appliances, which would alter those methods, he should be encouraged; and the additional price paid for his sacrifice to the cause of perfection. Take the gas kiln in the stained glass craft. It does the work quicker; it does not need a man's whole time to watch and stoke the kiln as it does when turf is used; but the writer has been assured by one upon whose judgment he can rely that by no other fuel can the gradual vitrefaction of the oxide of iron, painted on the pot-metal, be so deeply and *permanently* carried out; that in the gas kiln

four or five hours' work is settled in some twenty minutes, but with less happy results; that the expense of burning the glass is a very important item, and the use of gas reduces that expense immensely. And that is why it is used, and a man's time can be further utilized on odd jobs, such as totting up figures. Profit, legitimate profit, is one thing; callous commercialism quite another.\*

It was the purpose of the writer when he began these essays to try and make certain of the clergy dissatisfied. If that can be done to any extent, however little, this book will not have been so much nice clean paper irrevocably spoiled; some benefit to art may be the result, for out of dissatisfaction may progress upspring.

It is up-hill work, and one has to talk backward all the time, but it is a small hillock to ascend compared to the greater mountain ahead. And that mountain is church art, in its relation to human progress, and before that ascent is begun many minor hillocks have yet to be traversed. One can talk backward, yet struggle forward.

Wherever the Church flourishes there such

\*When I wrote this I was relying on the statement of an experienced stained glass craftsman who firmly believed in the use of turf fuel for his kiln. There may be, of course, even in Ireland where turf can be had in abundance, other reasons why gas is used in preference to turf, besides the commercial one *in toto*. Yet, if it can be demonstrated, by comparison of variously burned glass, that slow burning, as with turf, or wood fuel, produces better results in the art, than with gas, there can be but one excuse for a conscientious stained glass craftsman not using a turf kiln in Ireland. And that excuse is, that patrons may refuse the additional price that more expensive fuel compels the craftsman to charge for his windows. (Is it more expensive?)

arts as stained glass also flourish. She draws the arts to herself, but the manner of her selection depends on circumstances. Laymen can help to make circumstances . . . Chartres, Salisbury, Or' San Michele and St. Denis, and hundreds of other sacred fanes, great and small, were beautified by the gifts of laymen, corporate bodies of laymen, and by nobles who had the grace to return to the church some of the wealth earned by the Church's poorer children. And these nobles had not only the good fortune to remember their sins in time, but the good taste to turn such remembrance into aesthetic delights for the humble laity. There was, in the archaic birth of Christian art, glass mosaic on the walls, cemented there, as there is still. Here is an opening. But this glass is transparent ; glass is translucent ; lead is ductile.\* Let the light of day henceforth stream through these vitreous gems. Came the soldier ; the knight ; the noble ; the prince ; the Emperor himself :—" May my patron saint remember this, my tardy restitution of some of the material beauty I have dragged out of my contrition ! Yet, how little it seems ! "

Then, as the art progressed, glory fell upon the worshipper, sinner at confessional, or penitent at altar rail, upon pure nun in noon day chapel bright,

\* It is said that Santa Sophia was ornamented with coloured glass windows in the 6th century ; and that in the year 709 Wilfrid, Bishop of York, invited stained glass workers to come to England from France. Coloured glass itself, for various purposes, dates, of course, from Egyptian times.



or earth-distracted maid at the moonlit hour of prayer :—

“ Rose bloom fell on her hands, together prest  
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :  
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,  
Save wings, for heaven : . . . . ”

These accidentals, these undeliberate concomitants of ecclesiastical progression, were, indeed, a part of that unlimited benefaction from the Blessed and Ever Beautiful. In striving to realize through the material but a suggestive part, others revealed themselves. And if there be nothing further now for stained glass to reveal, these shafts of jewelled light, this chromatic refulgence and sky-lit blazonry may still, through the hand of the artist, repeat these revelations ; and so long as the delight of the mortal sense can be made to evoke the praise of the soul for the Divine Creator, so long will the Church beautify its edifices. And if architecture be “frozen music,” stained glass may be fitly paraphrased as chromatic prayer. But there are various kinds of music and many of prayer.

*The Irish Rosary*, February, 1903:

## ON VALUE AND CHURCH WINDOWS.

HAVING again been looking at some excellent stained glass recently executed in Dublin, and finding little or nothing to say in direct criticism of them that I have not said already of similar work, I venture to approach the subject of ecclesiastical windows from another standpoint. A standpoint, this time, of money alone. If a parish priest desires a good broad-cloth coat, and if he is prepared to pay a good price for it (as he usually is), he gets a good coat. Times were, and not so very long ago, when the average priest could get little or nothing, coats or anything else, but he took it philosophically and as a Christian, and hoped for better times. Now, better times have come; there is no doubt about that. Numerous new churches have arisen, and the parish priest before putting on his deservedly fine coat, can often, to-day, look over his shaving glass of a morning at the sparkling granite, or the firm limestone, buttresses of the adjacent reward to his toil. He has, it may be, sacrificed many things, if not his coat or his irreproachable soutane. Sometimes, it also may be, his new coat and the new coats of laymen—we know that—for sanctuaries are built upon many quiet bases of self-denial; let him sneer who will.

But as he looks over his shaving glass, he may

see, between those firm limestone buttresses, a window, with its wire guard to protect it from mischievous boys and, perhaps, an occasional fanatic. That wire guard, maybe, unconsciously helps a little toward the inward serenity of his mind as he descends to the sacristy, for does it not protect that which has completed the beauty of his church, real stained glass windows from Munich or Nantes? Ah! happy reward; and happier parish; now we have something to be proud of, something that is not Irish.

The parish priest (God bless him) is not prepared to pay as good a price, *ad valorem*, for his stained glass windows as he is for his coat. One hundred pounds for a moderate sized, two-light window seems a deal of money; and to pay two or three hundred for something which the majority of the parishioners may fail to appreciate seems like wasting the value of one or two more windows. And are they not racing another parish with their church? And it really takes a long time and needs much energy to collect that other one or two hundred. Art is hardly as appraisable as clothing, yet the waste, I venture to say, is with the cheaper window as with a slop suit. If a coat is cut well and fits well, and in addition is of excellent material, the wearer is saving money on evading a cheap slop. And cheap imported stained glass windows (and some Irish ones, unfortunately), are nothing better than slop windows. Badly designed, or not designed at all; badly

executed, and bad wearing windows, too ; and a hundred pounds, or fifty pounds for that matter, is wasted upon a window that an artist could not design and make for twice the money. The time may come when disgust will also come to many of the clergy, or their successors, every time these wretched windows are looked at ; just as it usually comes to an over economic purchaser of a slop suit. But a cheap slop suit may, at least, be a necessity under certain conditions ; a cheap slop window never is. There is no excuse for it ; none at all. A church once built for divine worship can at least wait for windows if benefactors are not forthcoming with enough of money for good glass. It is no excuse that a benefactor may offer to erect a cheap window. If he desired to make a priest a present of a slop suit, ill cut and ill made, the priest would find some way of courteously avoiding acceptance, we may be sure. Yet it seems that anybody can perpetuate indifferent art in the name of, and under the guise of devotion ; anybody with a little money can cheaply pose as an important benefactor to his parish with a limited order on firms in, say, Nantes, or Munich, to mention no other places nearer home. A benefactor may be truly devout, and disinterested, and his name remain unknown ; but in art the intention of the patron must necessarily be of secondary import. A work of art must first be judged as a work of art, and as nothing else, this is the stalest of truisms, of course.

The clergy, in the name of sacred art, in the name of that coming time, that will condemn this time of much make-believe, as this time (not all make-believe) condemns that of past make-believe—the clergy should hesitate, doubt, evade, persuade, do anything but yield to the cheapening spirit of ready made art—slop art as I have called it. I am not now concerned with any individual maker of stained glass. Good windows can be obtained in Ireland if the clergy choose to enquire. \* It is simply the getting of value for money that I am thinking of. One often hears to-day of the amount of money spent on Irish churches. As a matter of fact, not half enough is spent upon them, and that half approach is unsatisfactory in value received. If everything that has been erected, altars, statues, pulpits, windows and what not, had been conscientiously designed by artists, they would have cost double, treble perhaps, but there was no need to have erected them all just yet. And, in any case, the same money would have paid for simpler, yet more beautiful, objects of devotion, supposing they were as numerous.

As it is, a great part of the money spent on ecclesiastical ornament is wasted. There is not a great sum of money spent on churches per head of the population, and perhaps there could not be too much; but the money should be wisely spent. Churches with their altars and radiant windows are the one thing that the poor can enjoy, the one thing that all can enjoy, from the judge to

the fish-hawker ; free to hold and enjoy for life, whether they contribute a penny or nothing. But it is sad to see the few thousands or so that are spent (on coloured glass especially) disastrously wasted upon a cheap ignoble make-believe of art. For (with the exception of statuary) the lowest depths of a rampant, callous, competitive, commercialism is sounded, which the newspapers have puffed into a semblance of honest truth, well deep ; and of sincere art work, which it never was, and never will be. Shame will surely ride on the wings of the hours. For the rest, undying art can wait the turning of the wheel.

*The Leader*, 10th October, 1903.





OUR LADY WITH DIVINE INFANT,  
SS. JOHN AND DOMINICK.  
(DRAWING BY MICHAEL HEALY.)



## A BRIEF PROTEST AGAINST MISTAKEN REALISM.

FRA ANGELICO'S "Last Supper," in San Marco, Florence, is certainly the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, not an evening meal in Palestine. In this painter's "Resurrection" one can discern the portrait of Il Beato himself, and in a "Supper at Emmaus," by Paolo Veronese, in the Louvre Gallery, the painter not only introduces himself, but his whole family, as spectators. It was the fashion of the age; one finds these anachronisms, as they are called depreciatingly, everywhere in early art. But we are changing all that; we live in enlightened days, when Renan and Strauss, and everybody, is studied by everybody who paints; and by those who do not paint, but who patronise painting. . . Good reader, I take it that Fra Angelico and Botticelli read the Gospel narrative at least once in their lives. But they were painters and designers.

By mistaken realism, I mean a form of rationalism in art. Magazine illustration, generally, is helping to rationalise religious art. Historical incidents, rather than eternal facts, seem to be preferred for subjects.

Figures and drapery should certainly be repre-

sented with natural fidelity; but art exhibits itself as art, it may be, when it has rejected certain facts of nature as unnecessary. But it must beware what it rejects. And that which is unrejected must be the result of close study of nature in that unrejected part. Anything which makes the figure human and beautiful must not be rejected. But the limitations that have sprung from the arbitrary divisions of time can be reasonably ignored. Its disregarding is, one might put it, a step toward the true in religious art. There can be no such thing as an anachronism when materialising a spiritual truth, though this be based on a revealed or an historical and actual, if incomprehensible, fact. Its spiritual mystery (though this may be suggested on a material plane, by allegorical grouping, symbols, and the like) is a super-temporal actuality that raises it above chronology. Your religious artists in the past grasped this idea without any difficulty. Nowadays rationalism in religious art is invading the walls of our churches as well as our library tables, and one may see here and there, a reminiscence of the French Salon in the painting of a cheap chapel or a shrine. This tendency is becoming yearly more naturalistic, and in one sense it is doing a cruel thing: it is robbing those of imagination who can least spare it, and teaching them nothing that is worth the keeping.

The supreme moment of the Resurrection, *e.g.*, as an actual event in the eternal life of our Lord,

cannot be painted.\* In fact, all attempts to retell the more mysterious Gospel incidents in painting (or in literature for that matter) fail to tell it as well as it has been told by the Evangelists. They cannot be illustrated like an old romance or even as an ancient history. Sufficient was written of the events, but not for the painter as an *incidental illustrator*. The great mysteries of faith are beyond all story-telling art ; they demand the liberation of ideas that must clash with the facts of time, and costume, and place. Story-telling art here will only illustrate, if anything, the weak conceptions of the artist. (It is true that artists like Mantegna and Fra Angelico (*e.g.*), did attempt to illustrate incidents—see Mantegna's three small pictures in the N. G. London and Fra Angelico's series of the Life of Christ in the Florence Accademia, as examples of this attempt ; but they are fine works of art chiefly by reason of their colour and charming arrangements ; and the anachronological indifference exhibited in the choice of costume and in the portrayal of 13th and 14th century Italian types, raises them above the mere illustration of incident.) One is in the region of supernal

\* The last time I was in Italy, I took particular notes of some early Italian *Resurrections*. Christ, with or without a beard ; in red, white, blue, or no drapery at all ; soldiers in the composition, or absent ; saints present, angels present, or 'nobody present ; landscape, mostly Florentine when by Florentine painter ; Umbrian or Venetian, when by painters of those territories ; the fact of the *Resurrection* always insisted on, and the most unhistorical detail of all, the symbolic banner in the hand of Christ, generally insisted on.

mystery and of that unpaintable truth that can only be felt and believed. But this truth can be suggested through the very material rendering of one fact alone as a motive. The motive to be seized in the "Resurrection," for example, is that revealed idea, which is the same idea to all men in all ages, and, the idea being unalterable, it yet allows the greatest licence of artistic treatment within the motive, provided there be no rationalistic explanations to obscure, or destroy, or winnow away the mystic truth itself.

What we want is the religious motive and idea, with the religious manner, on the walls of our churches. Let the secular idea stop at the portal at least. Its place is the drawing room, or the council chamber; or the public square, if it be sculpture. This side the threshold of the holy places we want no sham realism that is only real in its falsity to immutable ideas.

What really may be of some importance, though this may be over-rated, is the symbolism of shapes and colours which have been fixed by age-long tradition. At least they are of more importance than "historical accuracy," as it is termed. In the Eastern Churches Judas Iscariot (as in the Last Supper representations) wears a nimbus, just because in the East the nimbus symbolises power, whether for good or evil—and not holiness or beatification alone—and in the older art of the church the devil himself is sometimes seen with the adornment of a nimbus. Now, a modern

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artist, even an Eastern one, would need a little courage to put a nimbus around the head of Judas or of Satan ; and he would feel the symbolical law rather irksome if he were restricted in his use of violet draperies, because they indicated penance, and of rose-coloured ones because they indicated martyrdom. Yet these restrictions are, in devotional art, of more importance than so-called "historical accuracy."

Now these, and like matters, being admitted, or granted, the painter's attention is in all else confined to his own ideas of design, and mass, and line, and generally of colour. A saint will look up and adore, or he will look down and humiliate himself ; he will raise his arms, or he will fold them on his breast, at the painter's pleasure ; not because any particular recorded action is to be retold by the pose of a head or the gesture of an arm, but, because, maybe, some long lines of drapery require breaking, and somebody's arm may need to be extended across them, or some necessary spot of light can be accounted for by an upturned face. And if a Madonna be clothed in richly brocaded silk, or a St. John the Baptist, or a St. Sebastian be partly or wholly nude, it is to contrast with the coarse serge of a friar's habit, or the plain linen of a rochet.

So let there be no misapprehension among my readers of certain artistic truths as distinguished from devotional ones. Because a certain kind of misapprehension is the high road to rationalistic representation. If Joseph of Arimathea's rock-cut

tomb be an imperative adjunct in his idea of a picture of the "Resurrection," I fear for his conceptions, or for at least the quality of them. A rock-cut tomb or a sleeping centurion may well be introduced, but it is not imperative. In one of Perugino's "Resurrections," for instance—and I refer to this picture, not because it is a perfect composition, but because readers of the *Irish Rosary* can easily refer to it, as it was reproduced in that magazine last April (1902)—in Perugino's "Resurrection," where the painter has introduced some of the facts related in the Gospel of St. Mark, viz., the sleeping guards, he has used them simply as decorative features, and, as such, they are used as necessary, but not more necessary, adjuncts than the solid aureola surrounding the whole figure of Christ, and the two angels who are put in the sky to balance the composition. They are there for no other purpose, and Perugino, who was a great painter,—one of the greatest among great painters—would probably have left them out if the composition did not need them. The drapery of Christ floats out across the solid aureola to break the monotony of its long curvature, not because it may have been a breezy Easter morning; and the tomb has its covering flagstone turned slightly, not to emphasize (though it agreeably does so) the departure of the body, but because the horizontality of the numerous lines of the tomb needed variety. But in various places in this picture there is rather a painful straining to overcome difficulties, and, as

I said, I only refer particularly to this "Resurrection" because Irish readers also can easily refer to it. The Fra Bartolommeo on the other side of the page, also a "Resurrection," is an example of what a great man can do with this subject, and there is not a risen Saviour more nobly treated in painting in the whole world than his. Here there are no faults. Every line is broken where it wants an interruption; there is no straining, and everything is in its proper place. And in the whole picture there is not one spark of rationalistic art. But I doubt not that Fra Bartolommeo had read the Gospel.

Yes, in "Resurrections," as in pictures of the Assumption, of the Immaculate Conception; of the Incarnation; of the Annunciation; and the like mysteries, there can be no sham explanations with the brush. The subjects are such tremendous ones that illustrative explanation must, in attempting to convey realistic truth, fail to impress any important truth on the mind. Facts they are, but as ordinary facts of perception they cannot be treated. Let the artist engage himself with his problems of design, and harmony, and tone. Let him begin as a painter and end as a painter, but, at the same time, let him not shatter imagination with borrowed historical exegesis. Let him paint a picture and suggest a truth, but let him not attempt to illustrate such a mystery as if it were solely an historical event. For its significance is deeper than that, and is as profound as existence, and as immeasurable as eternity.

## ON COLOURED DECORATION OF CHURCHES.

IN the essay on modern architecture, I said :—  
“ Interior colour is the one thing more abused than anything else, even than sculpture itself.”

Is it not true that colour is grossly abused in many of our churches, at least by the painter's brush if not openly by the critic who has been asked to admire the result ? Always this latter abuse under the breath—thoughts that hardly take verbal shape. Abuse is one of the substitutes for criticism. But abuse may almost be justified in the ground for it and also by the uncontrovertible terminology of an attack, emanating from no covert, no axe-grinding motive, no solitary cell of suspicious gloom. Yet after a prolonged tour around the Dublin (and some other) Catholic churches, the abusive word, taking apposite shape, faints into nothingness. Detraction remains, but only as season to wonder ; for the wonder grows stronger and deeper as sanctuaries and chapels and baptisteries are visited. And indeed it is wonderful that here in an age when art is preached from the house-tops, and the kerb-stone, from every public library table and school, that the art of decorative painting in churches should be carefully excluded by the clergy of a Church that made such an art in other countries the admiration



of the world. Not that painting itself is excluded, but that the art of decoration is.

The *general* colour of an edifice strikes the eye of an observer immediately the threshold is passed. Sometimes this effect does not depend directly upon any artificial colour applied to walls or roof, as it usually does in a square or other simply shaped church, where every corner of it is immediately visible. In the fine old Gothic churches (as they are termed) general effect may more slowly come of a thousand blending tones, from the architectural apertures and interstices, from triforium arcade and high springing vault, dim, lamp-lit chapel, rose-windowed transept, and all the shadowy secrets of much deep carving and screening. And among this general blending of tones may come gradually to the accommodating eye spots of vivid colour, like jewels in the pale tresses of a woman in the twilight, and bright petalled flowers wakefully expanding among the creeping shades of nodding day. But in what may be termed (here in Dublin, for the purpose of distinction) classic churches, with their four or more flat walls, with, perhaps, a flat, or a vaulted ceiling, and maybe a dome,—the architectural play of light and shade is a less appreciable quantity, and any colour from decorative work reveals itself immediately and completely in its general effect, either for good or ill. From the standpoint of art, an effect decidedly in Ireland for ill. And in the smaller “Gothic” churches, with an uncrossed nave and garishly lit aisles, the same remarks may be

applied—they are seen all over at a glance, and their effects are alike.

Colour is being so readily and rashly overdone that a writer upon it needs some quiet circumspection. Half a dozen men, with a few brushes and an undefined quantity of paint and varnish, can soon change the interior appearance of a modern sanctuary. Yet a “smart” painter does not live in ecclesiastical clover. The feast day of the patron saint must not see him disappoint the parish priest. The side chapel is to be dedicated by the Bishop on a certain day—it must be finished. It is finished and it is dedicated, what more is required? The man is paid, and as a matter of fact, he did not work half fast enough, says his employer, or the priest, or the people themselves. And the man goes back to his house decorating, it may be supposed, and finds a “job” where the tenant is expected in at the end of the month. But it is more easy to put off a tenant than a parish priest, he will tell you. “You won’t bluff the P.P. by telling him that one ‘coat’ ought to be dry before putting on another,” says your ecclesiastical and general house decorator.

Now, the tradesman who is accustomed—among other enormities—to do the sham marbling of public-house pilasters, and to the spattering of black paint over “stone colour” to make *real* limestone columns look like imitation granite, is not the “artist” to be turned loose in a church. Or rather, more strictly his employer whose orders he, with considerable skill, obeys, is not fit to be given the

decoration of a sanctuary. He, this latter "designer," has not the power to *feel* the necessity of the work ; he is, as it were, demoralized in the sphere of art by his exploitation of artizanry of this kind ; and he can no more appreciate the fit decoration of God's temple than a *debauchee* can reverence undefiled maternity.

Let one go back for contrasts in thought to times when there were no "decorators," as distinguished from painters who were artists. Let one go back in thought to Italy—nay, to Greece,—nay, rather to Egypt, the source of all the architectural arts of the west. In decorative fitness, in breadth of colour, in the adaptation of ornament to architectural form, Egypt has never been excelled. Treatment of the human figure has been carried further in painting, though the Egyptians seized upon the essentials of all human and animal movement. Ideals have been—to our Christian vision—more closely approached in later times ; but coloured decoration of architectural shapes reached a point in Egyptian pagan art which their form of civilisation could carry no further. And as decoration, keeping all the essentials of applied flat ornament inviolate, it was far enough for a nation. We are not concerned with its symbolic teaching or its symbolic recording, but with the Egyptian treatment of flat and moulded surfaces with coloured ornament and figured facts and customs. To be sure, the laws of the beautiful in art being unalterable, we may study them anywhere art has flourished. Beaten and chased and

filagreed metal work and illumination in Ireland ; sculpture on many a French or an English cathedral, or in the Elgin room of the British Museum, or at Florence ; and for individual painted presentment of the Catholic idea in saintly art, many an old Italian city. But for excellent examples of the fitness of coloured decoration and the flat treatment of walls and other surfaces it is good for one to think of Egypt ; and, as he may, look carefully at her so-called primitive work. Good then, indeed, to think just now, not of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, with its potent splendours of Buonarotti and its piquant graces of Botticelli ; not of that city of the Arno valley and of flowers, where the most cloistered of artists has given the world that travels the most comprehensively religious painting that Christianity has yet possessed. Good to think now of Egypt, not of Giotto at Assisi, or of Siena and Pinturicchio, or of both him and Raphael at Rome ; of Egypt, the pagan and oppressive. And here is the reason why one of decorative bent might find it good to know something of Egyptian art. A wall may have been, in its appearance, exchanged for a picture by the great later ones of Italy. Pictures may be well painted on walls at any time, and be judged as pictures ; but the Egyptian made his walls carry his paintings, and not his paintings replace the walls or support his roof. And for colour, though the Egyptian used the most brilliant colour in subdued light, he did not desire garish light to show up weak painting. He fitted his colour to his archi-

ture, as he also did his designs ; and it is for his fitness that it is good to consider the Egyptian and what he did on the columns and walls of his temples. Which is, to consider his artistic principles simply set forth ; not his subjects, nor his symbology—they are for a writer bent on other work or for the artist himself, when he lays aside his brush, to consider some of the convincing proofs (to be found in many another place on earth) that the motive power that carries the spirit of art upward to her meridian is not steam, nor electricity, nor anything connected with cog-wheels, though she make use of them when she cannot avoid them.

In mediæval times in England, when colour was used so well in churches, that only the Reformation itself seems to be an explanation of the reason why she did not develop a race of ecclesiastical painters, (though it hardly concerns us here) in the days of Ciambue, there were certainly artists in England as great as he. *E. G.* as decorative work applied to architecture, that of the period of the painting of the Chapter House at Westminster, and even that of an earlier period, is full of promise never fulfilled ; at least not yet fulfilled, to use language more exactly. But of the use of decorative painting in mediæval Ireland the writer has little or no knowledge. It probably partook of the character of the architectural work, as it did in England, and whether there was much of it, or little, he does not know. Where in England they gutted out a church, in Ireland they knocked it down, or blew it up, or

wrecked the roof, or otherwise amused themselves at the expense of the wicked Catholics, who have so ungratefully never thanked them or their descendants from that day to this. The writer however, has some knowledge of Irish decorative painting in the present day, and were there such a thing as forgetting at will, he would attempt to acquire that faculty. The next best thing, maybe, is to pass on a little of that knowledge, whatever be its value, to others, and thus both speak and ease his mind.

When a modern Irish church passes into the house decorator's hands, as it were—when that day has arrived upon which his tender is accepted—when the church passes into hands such as these, one may expect what one sees a few months later. And one may expect just what the newspapers do *not* say about the little flowers, and stars, and tendrille borders and St. Joseph's Lily, and the Bishop and the parish priest. One may also expect that the said parish priest will feel happy, the congregation passively proud, and the decorator boisterously jubilant (over his parlour fire) at the column of advertisement; and finally, one may expect that the newspaper (nay, to expect anything about a newspaper is more absurd than the other anticipations, for your parish priest, your congregation, even your house decorator, have conscience; but your daily paper—what has *it* ?)

Times have, indeed, changed since Westminster Hall, or the Chapter House near by, or hundreds

of little churches like that of Widford in Hertfordshire, and that of Kempley in Gloucestershire, with, perhaps, their coloured counterparts, or variations over here ; times have changed since saint and angel took happy shapes along their walls ; times have changed since the mediæval artist worked slowly and religiously at his Christ “ seated on a rainbow,” or Christ “ seated in judgment, and at His side His Blessed Mother ; ” times have changed since layman and cleric worked together in the enrichment of altar, and shrine, and cloister, with the intelligence and travail that cared little for time itself, but only that their work should glorify God, and be the best art of the time in which they lived. Times have changed, and brought the daily newspaper puff of the modern house decorator, sometimes with his paint-pot, and sometimes with his paper, which he pastes on the soffit of an arch to look like paint ! Churches now must be “ done up ” like houses for a new tenant. But what church art, and what an illustration of it ! Can we not feel shame by anticipation ? Will men be saying a hundred years hence, not as they say now (perhaps with truth), of an individual worker in early Florence, or in ancient Athens, that he cheated his employer ; but that the ecclesiastical architects, sculptors, and decorators in Ireland were first-rate *men of business* ; whatever else they were not.

But let us see more particularly, what the times—that is to say the admitted circumstances, some avoidable, some not—have brought us here in

Ireland. And if my few selective examples are rather from the diocese of Dublin, than from Cork, or Waterford, or Kilkenny, or elsewhere, it is only because I am convinced that the examples are fairly representative of the decorative ecclesiastical art of the whole country. One may find, it is true, some little indication of good taste, of ecclesiastical fitness in unexpected places, but no needle in no rick of hay was ever more difficult to find.

The times have brought to Ireland brand new churches, with brand new decorated sanctuaries, like those of the Assumption at Rathfarnham, and the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Inchicore, the Church of St. Mary in Haddington Road, of The Redeemer, at Bray, and the Church of St. Joseph, Berkeley Street. The times have also brought brand new decorations applied to older churches as at St. Francis Xavier's, St. Andrew's, Westland Row, and St. Michael and St. John's on Essex Quay. They have also brought the decorator, who is hardly a house-painter and hardly an artist; the smart man with a brush that can fill in a panel with a group, or an angel, the said group or angel having been painted in Italy fifty or five hundred years before. Perhaps the reader has been to the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, and seen those oblong panels above the arches of the nave. They extend right round the church, and are probably of a somewhat older date than the other paintings in the church. (I write subject to correction.) The compositions in some of them are very weak, silly



art. The Ascension and Assumption and others, for example, where the oblong extends its empty rolling cloud forms on either side of the single figures. But some of the panels are crowded, and, seemingly, bad copies of old masters. Perhaps the reader has also been to the church in Haddington Road and seen the panelled angels on the sanctuary walls, four life-sized ones with big wings ; and some other panels with rolling clouds, like the effect of damp on the plaster of the walls, among which heads of cherubim float in the "pretty" Christmas card style. The vaporous cloud around the legs of the four life-sized angels (with their very "sweet," chocolate-box, effect) unpleasantly suggesting steam arising if one can but momentarily imagine that the walls are not decaying. And these figures the painter has tried his utmost to force out of the panels. This kind of figure work, as well as the ornaments around and above, decorate nothing. Now, hundreds of ceilings have been painted, some by clever artists, with cloud forms and charioted Auroras, and so forth, and if the deception is complete we can pardon it only because of the art that makes it so. It is possible to imagine no roof to a building, and in hot weather it is not an unpleasant illusion, but walls, or parts of walls, treated with realistic cloud surroundings is neither decoration nor deception. An arch supports the wall above it, and if clouds are painted around the arch, the arch is separated from the superstructure—supposing the clouds are well painted. If the clouds be not

well painted, the attempt becomes more ridiculous than success.

The reader, maybe, also knows the Church of St. Francis Xavier's, in Gardiner Street, as he knows St. Andrew's, Westland Row, two of the older churches, as modern churches go. Apart from the altar piece and other hung pictures in St. Francis Xavier's, and apart from the coloured statuary (as bad as any in Ireland), what is the average man's opinion on the decoration of this church? I must confess that the average man's opinion is summed up in this average woman's opinion—"O, it's just lovely since they 'did up' the side chapels." I have heard the like in a theatre the night after a re-opening. "Isn't it lovely since they 'did up' the ceiling?" The average man, somehow, through seeing nothing but bad, silly work everywhere, is easily pleased with a little colour and tinsel. I am not going to run a tilt at the average man here, but I want to ask him whether a church should not be something different from a circus, or an assembly room, or a theatre? Whether cheap paper decoration and sham mosaic, and so forth, however pardonable (which for my part I don't allow) in the house of secular amusement, is yet allowable in the House of God, when there is no compulsion to decorate in any particular manner? I have met men who affect to sneer at religious art, and who say there is no such thing—that there is but art. Well, churches like St. Xavier's will give men some reason to say that there is no decorative religious art in

Ireland at all, if such "decoration" spreads over the country, and there are signs of it increasing in many places.\*

Passing St. Andrew's, with a shrug, the reader will, probably, prefer "Gothic" church sanctuaries like that at Inchicore, or that at Rathfarnham. He may incline toward simplicity of colour scheme, whether it come of the extensive use of gold, or red, or any other dominating colour, and at Inchicore he will not in this respect be disappointed; but if he approach much nearer than just within the main door-way he will find any pleasure in the golden unity of effect disappearing. He will find that text all round a discordant feature, and the repeating pattern below; he will find the small angels interwoven in the foliated ornament weak and ordinary, and I am almost sure he will find his eyes straying to the two flanking chapels with their walls covered with little white boxes all labelled like drawers in a grocer's or druggists's shop. Scores of them. What they are there for he will begin to wonder (if he is not the average man), and when he discovers they are the multitudinous names of benefactors,—not of some ecclesiastical stock-in-trade unknown—his wonder will not cease. It will take another turn, that is all; he will still wonder what kind of man it was

\* The Carmelite Church, Whitefriar Street, has now been "done up" in the usual way. (April 1905). I have read a "magnificent" puff of this decorating in a daily paper. Is it possible for any but the blind to pray in such churches! Plain brick, stone, or plaster, is never vulgar; seldom irritating; but café, or music-hall, decoration is generally so.

that "designed" the ornament. But he will probably, prefer even the sanctuary of the Inchicore Church to that in the Church of the Assumption at Rathfarnham. When he has looked at the stained glass here, he can (in part) shake them off by looking at the angels up there where a window seems blocked up. The decoration is superior to the window glass, to be sure, but could anything on earth be inferior to those? Of the sanctuary decoration a good word may be said. The general effect from a distance, red predominating, is not unpleasant, and it is only when we come close and look into details that we can see how "ordinary" they are. But a sanctuary is for near and far, and the reader will, though he but genuflect at the entrance, kneel longer at the altar rail. That is an "ordinary" fact worth remembering.

Going through my notes of the decorative work of Dublin and other churches is unpleasant work. I have no love for it, in itself, because it recalls many moments when devotion has battled with dejection. I think those few examples I have referred to are fairly typical. There are notes of ceilings being painted like that of St. Michael and St. John's, on Essex Quay, spaced out and filled in with stock ornaments, and back-grounds to altars with more stock powdered upon it; there are pink walls here and elsewhere, and there are fancy linoleum patterns as in the sanctuary of the Holy Family, at Aughrim Street, that church where the high altar reminds one of a huge piece of furniture in a small back

parlour, and where the nave is the ugliest in Dublin.\* There are churches like this and Phibsborough (St. Peter's) undergoing restoration, and in most cases—undoubtedly in the case of Aughrim Street—the restorer or enlarger is not unfortunately placed, for he cannot make that interior worse, and he may, possibly, make it better if he employ artists to do the decorative work, whether in colour or material. Cork or Waterford, or other Irish cities could furnish further examples of equally poor commercial work, but those I have referred to will serve. If one journeys to Bray or Galway, or Kilkenny, or anywhere, village, town, or city, it is alike; there is the same trade stamped everywhere.† No locality reveals its special line of thought. The writer knows the original reason why this is so; and because it is futile deploring the reason he attempts to breed in his own way, and to the extent of his limited powers, a form of unrest with things as they are, so that, maybe, some artistic life may struggle to plant in places fresh reasons why things shall be different hereafter.

Decoration, of course, has its essentials like everything else, and these essentials must ever be in the mind of the decorator. One of the essentials of decoration, whether in colour, or in carving without colour, is that the purpose or general shape of the object to be decorated shall not be changed. It

\* Alterations have since been carried out in this church and the nave widened.

† See my article on the "Cathedral at Armagh," the chief Cathedral in Ireland. *Leader*—June, 1904.

must be ornament applied, not ornament usurping the place of that which needs enrichment. The capable decorator may have reason to say hard things about the architect sometimes, yet it is really a test of a painter's—of an artist's—power of design when very awkward shapes have to be filled. One may often note how indifferent painters have attempted to wriggle out of difficulties with something cheap—some stock unit of ornament that he imagines can be arranged and re-arranged to fill in any space, or adapt itself to any capital or moulding. Not so those Egyptians, and not so the Greeks ; and seldom so the Christian artist of mediæval times, details of whose work our modern decorators essay to imitate ; and libel in the attempt.

Of course where there are no fresh architectural forms to be ornamented there must be a constant temptation to the ordinary decorator to apply his duplications taken direct from his book of patterns, labelled from the church of such-and-such a place, thirteenth century, or the chapel of so-and-so, fourteenth century ; and especially if the architect has been to similar sources for the interior of his church. But a capable artist, if given a free hand by his patron, could surmount that difficulty, and add something of individual character and thought. A difficulty which might not be surmounted is that the patron would probably be dissatisfied unless the painter agreed to subordinate his *ideas* to the architect's stock work ; for it is a fact that, for the last twenty years or more, patrons (chiefly parish

priests directly) have become so imbued—so saturated with weak architectural hogwash, I should put it—that unless everything afterwards do not strictly accord with their maltreated sense of the beautiful, they reject it as—let us say it with amused, if serious commiseration—as not *matching* the rest of the work. It is so ; from the time that the foundation stone is laid until the last star is stencilled on the ceiling one idea is dominant—that everything must *match* everything else. And those of us here in Ireland that know just a little about art, know only too well what it means, when a saint has to “ match ” an altar, and an altar a pulpit, a pulpit a font ; a font a pedestal ; a pedestal a corbel ; and the coloured decoration “ match ” the whole church. Some dim idea of unity is at the bottom of all this matching, just as some idea of unity is at the bottom of Imperialism in politics, I suppose ; and you will reach a unity of beauty as readily one way as the other. Match-making empires are hardly things of beauty, and sameness and unity are two very different things, in churches or elsewhere. It is certain that many an Irish parish priest would hesitate to give a picture a place in his church—a picture such as Mr. Francis O'Donohoe's, illustrated in this number of the *Irish Rosary* (June, 1903)—because he would consider that the *round* arch above the Madonna's head would not “ match ” the *pointed* arches in his church ! Like furnishing a house at the universal stores everything must “ match ” from overmantels down to tea-cups and the mustard pot.

When one considers the vast hagiological reserve fund, so to say, at the constant disposal of the church decorator, emblems and symbols ornamentally suggest themselves almost without limit. Let us hope the decorative artist of the future, in Ireland, will not repeat some of his predecessors' degradations. Last December, in the *Leader*, I referred to the house decorator's symbology,\* which is sometimes badly borrowed, sometimes (I fear) invented. It is hardly worth while referring again to the Pro-Cathedral; even the more indifferent of the clergy seem united in deprecation of it, from what I gather in conversation, but until it is scraped down and gutted out it will serve as an example of what should never have been. But I had rather some of the decoration in that building than see (as at St. Teresa's, Clarendon Street) a "Tree of Jesse" painted on the flat ceiling. Unless a "Tree of Jesse" is upright on a wall, it is a failure as ornament, supposing it be done well, which is the only excuse for it, or for anything painted.

Decoration, whether it include foliated or geometric ornament, or figure work, must be decoration of something fit to be decorated. Decoration cannot exist of itself and remain decoration. A bit of gilt-wood-carving in the glass-case of a museum may certainly have an instructive use—it may certainly please the eye by what it is in itself, yet the eye that searches for beauty must bring with it

\* See the concluding essay in this book—"A Mountain Church."



a mind that desires enlightenment, with the imagination that desires enjoyment. The most beautiful piece of ornament detached from the place that it was designed to fill, ceases to be decoration, it does not enlighten beyond the confines of detached detail, nor satisfy as decoration at all. Figures in relief may be included, and even in the round where they are specially *designed* for niches, and so much is this recognised by thoughtful men, that when, as it happened, the St. George of Donatello was removed from Or San Michele to the Bargello in Florence, a similar niche to the one it had vacated was constructed to hold it. (If you want to see St. George out of his niche and habitat just go to the Kildare Street Museum), and, of course, with other ornaments flat or in relief, coloured or uncoloured, it is the same. Now, we must postulate something fit to be decorated (as Or San Michele was fit to be decorated) internally or externally ; a corbel in the ugliest of Irish churches may be fit to have decoration applied, or the apse of any Gothic church in the country. It may be fit, not necessarily is ; and whether it be fit or not is one of the things that only good taste can determine.

Supposing we, then, have a fit object fittingly ornamented in colour, under conditions as fit as possible (and by that I mean conditions of labour and purpose), we have something that is to be desired in Ireland—something that only in rare cases really exists. Commercialism, with hardly one redeeming point in its character, sits in judgment

upon everything. If, in a gray church, where the sanctuary of limestone be fit enough, a painted altar piece would be the necessary adornment, be sure the walls are covered with *fleur-de-lis* or with monograms, and the altar an architect's stock "Gothic" one in white marble. Some decorator is keeping another patron impatiently waiting to have the like done in *his* sanctuary, and some artist is speculating whether he had better emigrate, or remain to be brutally starved to death by the spirit of commercialism.

It is a fact, I repeat, that some Catholic churches and chapels are often "done up" as modern villas are hastily "done up." The writer has seen half a dozen men working away in an over-decorated church, among whom one man was running hair lines all over a gold back-ground to imitate mosaic, another was pasting on paper with painted flowers, another was coming after him on the damp surface with lettering, and another was waiting to varnish. He has also seen other things which it would in the lengthy statement of them all convert this article into a diatribe. Where commercialism in art is superdominant, the artist is crushed and helpless. He, the artist, who should be the adviser, becomes almost a despised hanger on, to be sought for only when commercialism is in a tight corner. There is hardly an altar-piece in the country—probably there is hardly one by an Irish artist worthy of notice—yet the money that is being wasted on decorating walls (not with fine pictures which are desirable)—not with

fit ornament, as did the men of older times—but with cheaper stuff than one may meet with in theatre, or town hall, or assembly rooms—this money might have erected a few altar-pieces, that in after times would have filled the traveller, as well as the inhabitant, with admiration and devotion.

Colour, as an adjunct to the architectural beauty of form, whether in material or in painted details, is as old as civilization ; and our modern civilization must look to past ones for instruction. Here in Ireland, for its ecclesiastical art, where else can it look ? For the modern man of ecclesiastical commerce can teach nothing but what to avoid ; he himself is but a purloiner and exploiter of defects. It is true we can look always to nature, and the nature about us, wedded to a religion, will serve among a people that may love both. But the past ever holds the key to the armoury of effective treatment, through purpose and desire being ever the same. Without colour, life is monotonous, and objective religion is denying herself one of the attributes of her existence. In this pause of Ireland's destiny there is a craving for colour, for warmth.\*

\* A few months ago, one night in December, I saw a coloured plaster statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception—one of those ordinary statues we are so accustomed to in Catholic Churches—placed high on a pedestal over a Dublin church door. It was illuminated with starry jets of flame. In front of the church a large crowd had assembled, and a group of men, women and children were joyously singing a Hymn to Mary, the Mother of God.

But what interested me chiefly was the conversation of the crowd around me. It is in this way that I have studied always the feelings of the people. The unusual brightness of the façade

Men everywhere turn toward a crimson sunset after a grey day, as they turn to prayer in misfortune: they turn to a golden sunrise, as they turn to prayer after a revelation of the night of hell.

Without colour in the sanctuary, religion is not so well served, so well cynosured to a congregation. Architecture is the setting of visible religion, but colour should be the jewels; and if, by just arrangement, coloured details group themselves in the vicinity of the tabernacle of Love, so that the eye is drawn toward that tabernacle itself, something spiritual is given by the artist toward the religion he serves, and of serene pleasure and uplifting to the devotional man. There is both a visible pointing and a chromatic apostrophe. But no decorator can uplift the soul if he be not an artist. No arrant commercialist can—though he might live and try for aye. Except by a miracle—except by a miracle! There is an apparent need for such in Ireland to day.

of the church, the *cheerfulness* of it, impressed many. Indeed, if one kept a long way off one could imagine the statue a Della Robbia figure, say, permanently there as adornment of the architecture. When it was removed, a few days later, there were many, I feel sure, who regretted its departure. With all the thousands of houses in Catholic hands (owning them) in Dublin, we never see any attempt to decorate dingy architecture with coloured shrine of Madonna, or Saint. But perhaps it is as well until men know *how* to decorate.

## ON STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

THE writer has looked at many pictures in many Irish churches. Most of these pictures represented the same subject—the Passion and Death of Christ. He was tempted to write at length upon them. For the present a few words in general about Stations of the Cross may help to lay a basis for a future book on Catholic Church painting, if it do nothing better.

When the interior of a church has been completed, and, it may be, a temporary high altar erected, the thoughts of prior or parish priest turn, I imagine, towards less essential, but very important, details. Whether there be benefactors with bulky purses or not, several beautiful and necessary devotions, possible indeed, to certain meditatives without the external stimulus of art, have to receive what one may term a concentrating and honouring objectivity. For it seems that when art is chosen as the handmaid of religion, there always follows this materialization of prayer. When that delightfully rabid Philistine, George Borrow, makes his preposterously pagan nightmare of a priest (?) say between his sips of gin and water, "I tell you, Zingara, that no religion can exist long which rejects a good bodily image," he makes him utter somewhat of a strained truth for a very malicious reason. With artless Borrow's anti-Catholic reason none of us need be concerned. But the truth about

all *images* is this :—That the ecclesiastical arts have always flourished where the church was strong and free, and in proportion to that strength and freedom has been the quality of the art. Where she slowly and painfully emerges after a period of ignorant persecution, she is wisely restoring the “good bodily image.” I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word. And whether the image be painted on canvas, or carved in marble, she desires that it be a “good bodily” one. Unfortunately, in Ireland, at least, to desire is not to know or to accomplish; and this may be attributed to the present state of emergency and semi-culture, the result of past misfortune. “The sons of my mother have fought against me; they have made me the keeper in the vineyard; my vineyard I have not kept.”

So Stations of the Cross, fourteen “images” of Our Lord, among other things, have to be erected. They are almost necessities for the parish at large, and the conscientious priest hastens to erect them. He falls a prey to the ubiquitous commercial traveller from other lands where art has fallen also temporarily low. For patronage, directly and in all its effects secular, has made modern Catholic religious art the shift of more or less skilful copyists, or indifferent tradesmen, who employ the least tolerable of such copyists. A strange thing happens under the circumstances — everybody eulogises these pictures! And it becomes a very delicate matter at times to criticise them fairly. Just consider religious art a little. Then consider,

in perhaps an unhabitual mood, the primary purpose of that cumulative series of paintings which represent the selection of the Church of certain scriptural and traditional events in the Passion, Death, and Burial of the Saviour of Mankind. Then, having considered that primary purpose, one's critical faculties—stirred to immediate exercise by the secondary, yet necessarily concurrent and visible purpose, the fitting decoration of consecrated walls—became, I think, keener, less conciliatory, more exacting than they would had this latter and lesser purpose been the sole aim and intention. For when one performs this devotion of the Way of Sorrow, the sacrosanctified path of love and life, one has been a pilgrim in spirit to the land of the holy Passion. Formerly the few went to Palestine, now, the many go with like intent to the parish church.

But this Holy Land is everywhere on earth wherein the souls of the faithful may dwell by an effort of devotional imagination. Though, indeed, imagination, which is in a sense a partial releasing of the soul from direct mental impression, can differ in quality, in intensity, as well as in intention. Sensuous masterful painting may send all the molecules of the brain vibrating with the rhythm of devotionless pleasure, and the soul may feel its allurements almost too great for extrication. More imperfect, narrower in expression, yet more religiously intentional work may, though one feel justified in censuring its defects, raise the imaginative.

and devotional faculties into a purer atmosphere ; and criticism itself become weakened after their more untrammelled flight. But where that primary purpose, referred to above, is unquestionably united with the lesser and secondary one, perfect decoration, in such a manner that one is the perfect reflection of the other, like an ideal marriage, or motherhood, or any other typical duality, you there alone have something to which no Pagan can say, Vah!

We may have to wait a long time, here in Ireland, before we have a Church art which shall be admirable in everything. That time may never come ; it may not be necessary ; we don't know. But churches are being decorated, and Stations of the Cross are being imported. As the writer has stated, he has looked at a fair number of them, and, just at present, he shrinks from seeing any more. He is satisfied for a time.

The subject itself is one to festoon with superlatives. These pictures in Ireland only raise one's thoughts, by contrast, to what might be ; to what may be, let us hope. One of the most difficult of mental operations is to raise oneself out of the dull, oppressive atmosphere of mediocrity into the exhilarating air of God's beautiful garden, if the material forces are sordid and commonplace. Decadent imitation has reigned many long years on her shoddy throne—a throne that has become at times so apparently inviolate, that vague phantasms of a false disloyalty to her sceptred weaknesses may uneasily flit before the ecclesiastical imagination, whenever one



whose loyalty to art condemns her imitative majesty in the stronger name of a legitimate queen—a queen whose pregnancy she has retarded, but whose beauty she cannot tarnish, nor whose loyal subjects she can never permanently sway. Yet this imitative—sometimes duplicative, rarely pardonably replicative—modern work, has still the power to open doors into vestibules of delight. There are interior chambers. But one doubts sometimes whether his neighbour can force their barriers; has the power or imagination to do it, granted the desire. The highest art certainly reduces the necessary effort, and therein lies its value as a religious adjunct. But there is an imitation, which is a following; which is a kind of an adumbration of influences; the harvest of thoughtful study, grown from the seeds of endeavour. But this is more a merging of the sun's potentiality into the chlorophyll of the plant; and if there be too much sun there may be aridity, and the shadows of seclusion may be a necessary corrective.

This order of imitation, this reflection of blended and lasting vogues, we always find in the work of the sincere artist who has studied older work with reverence. An artist should be a student all his life, and leave it to posterity to estimate his correlative value as a master. The tendency of to-day is to publish special monographic articles of young men, either because their brushes are two inches wide or because they have extraordinary theories about colour that never suggested themselves

to Titian. And if they can paint spirits on their proper astral planes they can always command a few pages in magazines with uncut edges and brown paper covers. There are two things, at any rate, that the painter must master early in his career—his drawing and his technical handling of paint. His sense of colour may come, develop, or become atrophied from want of exercise ; but if he enter manhood a bungler in his drawing and a mere mucker with a palette knife, or a hazy stumbler over difficulties, he will need a very worshipful and self deceptive coterie about him to keep himself in humour. The true artist is seldom satisfied with his work, and however early in life it may be, always discovers the reason of his dissatisfaction ; but your complacent tin-pot idol on his little mannered pedestal takes the homage of his immediate set, and sticks there like a Chinese joss with lead in his belly. He can never lie down, he is so used to looking down ; he is weighted like a magic bottle. In London he is already a plague, in Paris he is an agglutimizer of facts and modes, and in Dublin—well, there are signs of him even in Dublin. The bungler is ubiquitous, and it is to be hoped the Church will avoid him.

In the painting of religious pictures, such as Stations of the Cross, the artist takes upon himself an unenvious responsibility. If he be a young man with the sense of responsibility but imperfectly developed, his work may be vigorous with the individuality of early years, but it may

be affectedly bizarre, or it may be unaffectedly tame. There is nothing bizarre, and nothing tame in the story of the Sacred Passion. It is all solemn strength; and that is what your really religious painter always strove for with his drawing, his design, and his colour. Quiet, harmonious, dignified, solemn strength; and thus by his art he reflected, unconsciously, inner meanings which he assumed to be outside of his province. For the artist himself is but an instrument, and his business is to perfect its technical construction.

The selection of types is not the first consideration of the painter—or it seldom is, or ought to be. Point of view, and then the technical problems which include the control of all that is necessary to express his ideas as a painter—not as a teacher, nor as a divinity student. Design and arrangement of masses; their balancing and colour are imperative. But the selection of types is everything to the devotional man; to him, perhaps, the type which awakens his imagination in the Madonna may be the unageing chastity of Angelico's creations, or it may be the pensive elegance and the sinuous maidenly shapeliness of Botticelli's. He desires, what he terms, the spiritual, and his desire is right. But different objects stir different minds in different ways, and, after all, we can only answer for our own mind, and compare its judgments with those of majorities. And it is sometimes both a delight and a confirmation of good taste, to discover that one's sentiments

are those of quite a small minority. Still minorities do at times hold all that which more thoughtful majorities have rejected as despicable and unclean. And to the devotional man, ideas of history, of tradition, even of religion, may not be vitally important in the picture, but ideas of the perpetual beauty and the maidenhood of the Madonna\* are, and of the glorified manhood of Christ. If these ideas are absent, or lowered, there is a reduction of devotional force. And in the present period, one of false realism and of materialism, there is a decided reduction of devotional force. Men have such realistic ideas that in "Annunciations" the Angel Gabriel is drapery alone without a body, and the correct shape of a Syrian hydria of more account than the solidity of the painting. This aping in paint of a literary and a liberal spiritualism is the worst form of modern religious realism. Spirits cannot be painted—they cannot, in painting, be suggested even—we doubt the convention immediately we see the landscape through their gossamer draperies; and yet Fra Angelico's *solid* angel Gabriels, with solid wings, are certainly from another world. But he was not a literary painter, and the spiritual must arise

\* In Early Italian Art the Virginity of Our Lady is the great *fact*; in late, the motherhood. If a painter insist on the Motherhood, *in his painting*, it is probable he cares for nothing but the *painting of it*. Which is well, perhaps, for art, and art alone. He who would paint Virgin-Maternity must care for nothing (at the time) but the painting of Virginity. Both facts cannot be *painted*; though, by the introduction into the picture of the Infant Son, the Maternity is acknowledged or suggested

from, and through solidity, if it is to arise at all. He knew that, and he could paint what he knew.

But as a set-off against this "realistic" sham spiritualism, is the painting of the gross and the undevout. It is the reaction of the desire to represent one's thoughts about things, and culminates into painting just and everything that one sees, when one ought to metaphorically shut one's eyes and wait for a change of scene.

But what have we in Ireland? "Stations of the Cross," in every church, and devout people anywhere they are to be seen. What are these pictures of the Passion? Whence came they? Painters in the past created types, some of them beautiful, most of them interesting, but the modern Italian or Bavarian has rung every change, as well as the original carillon, on every type of the past. And his ringing gets worse and worse, weaker and weaker, more uninteresting and vapid every day. The fact is, his impetus is not from art, or love of art, or love of religion, or from devotion even; it is from business pure and simple.

Business, pure and simple, and ingenuous. The commercial traveller fairly represents the work; the firm as fairly represent it, and the "artist" represents it. Each of them typifies business; but the middleman is the only crafty member of the triad. The commercial traveller in "art" is really both a very interesting and an unconsciously amusing person; and it is well known that all pot-boiling painters are. Of course it would be unkind

to shut the door in the traveller's face, or to ask him to take a chair near a draughty door while you go up stairs to forget him and have your lunch, as it would be to write harsh things about the painter. But for the exploiter we need have no melting tenderness, and I will return to him and to this subject of church painting on a future occasion.

Reproductions of two out of a complete set of fourteen Stations of the Cross accompanied, but did not exactly belong to, this short Essay. They had been lately executed (*circa*, March, 1903), and rather rapidly, by an Irish artist—Mr. Francis O'Donohoe; and, by his courtesy, readers of the *Irish Rosary* were given something to look at which doubtlessly stirred different feelings in different minds. The colour, of course, could only be guessed at, and the values usually go all wrong in reproduction of this kind. Readers will have to rely upon the writer's assurance that this colour, its quality and its values, is the chief charm of the whole set. And next to that is their general design and arrangement of well-balanced masses, and well thought-out problems of line and action. As for the artist's selected types and his ideas about the treatment of the Sacred Story of the Passion, I have nothing to say, except that the painter has, it appears, looked at everything from the standpoint of the painter. These types may be a weakness among considerable strength. His landscape backgrounds, without being definitely recognizable, are of his native country; their colour, their skies, are of Ireland, not of Italy, nor of Palestine; and the figures moving upon them are directly and solidly painted.

I have added this note, because they are, I believe, the first set of stations painted by an Irishman, living in Ireland, and the Parish Priest of Screen, County Wexford, is to be commended for his sensible patronage of a young artist, who will some day, one may hope, do excellent things upon further native encouragement.

One word more. The Way to Calvary lies through Screen as much as it does through Dublin, or Florence, or Rome, or, in a certain sense, Jerusalem. It lies everywhere, and everywhere has the Cross to be borne along. But a set of painted pictures intended for an Irish country church, would, if reproducing some of the features of the surrounding town or country, offer greater incitements to devotion than if they represented more foreign parts. What has happened next door, or in one's own house, is always more vivid than what has happened hundreds of miles away in a foreign land.

## ON CHEAP CHURCHES FOR THE POOR.

A STRONG suggestion of those who have attacked the necessary—still to-day more necessary—church building in Ireland is that the little money they have cost is, as it were, lost altogether. This little money is dexterously made to represent an enormous outlay, and when not actually stated in so many words, is also represented as being drawn from an exhausted people who need every penny of it for loaves and Dublin Bay herrings. Now money is always reluctantly given by the majority of people for purposes wherein they do not personally benefit, and Ireland is like other countries in this matter of giving. That the Irish, when giving to the church, do really benefit themselves, morally, mentally, bodily or spiritually, is one reason why they give; the chief reason why the majority give, I imagine. They expect, and they do really receive, *value* for their money. That is a very rough and ready way of putting it. But that enormous sums have been spent on church building in a Catholic country (that a few years ago was without any tolerable Catholic churches) is a fallacy. A fallacy by analysis. For, if every Catholic inhabitant in Ireland were compelled to give only one penny per month toward church building, in twenty years all that has been un-

fortunately built could be built over again. *Absit omen !* I said unfortunately.

If "economy" is attempted in any quarter in Ireland, then it is attempted by the clergy in the building of the people's churches. How to save money, and how to make a shilling produce a meretricious effect, where it would take an honest pound to create a finer (and sometimes a more lasting one) is a problem that the industrious parish priest, or tireless peripatetic bishop, seem constantly solving. They usually start with no money at all. When I read articles—as I have done once or twice of late—about enormous expenditure on costly churches set among garnishing hovels of poverty, I could almost smile to think of the six or eight shillings a week temperately spent on the family porter for the "hovel" and the penny door-money for the support of the parish priest on Sunday ; if the penny be always given. The clergy appeal for money, and from the truly poor they ask and expect nothing. The church itself, when built, is to be mainly for the poor—but the poor are blessed with nothing—yet it is they who are to receive, not give ; and this is as it should be.\* Then there is the mission to the United States, or to Australia and Canada ; and

\* That they often do give, I do not deny ; but that the churches (such as they are) are built, or kept up "with the pence of the poor," as I have heard many a parish priest, and occasionally a bishop, state, I do not believe. At least the word "poor" must mean something different to my mind than to theirs, if there is truth in their statements.



there are the thousands of letters that are sent to these countries pleading for money ; the thousands of bazaar tickets which are sent to and bought in America and the Colonies ; and the other manifold ways of collecting money that the parish priest, too poor to travel, has to resort to. The poor Irishman at home may keep his hands in his pockets. He is asked for nothing ; he is to receive, not give ; the church is to be built for him. And the poor we shall always have—under monarchy, bureaucracy or anarchy, or any other system of minding each other's business for ourselves.

But the poor man, or rather the labouring man, in other ways, receives, not gives. A man, more blessed in worldly goods, also receives his share of the spoil from America. It may be an architect, or it may be a monumental mason—by courtesy a “sculptor.” Let A have a shop, with a figure or two and half a dozen tombstones in the window. Now let A have a relative, B, with some money—let B be, for instance, the widow of a retired publican. B gives forty, or fifty, pounds for an altar (say, a miserable hundred) out of her late departed's savings, and suggests to the P.P. that A shall have the making of the altar—the P.P. being an “Irish Revivalist,” likewise A, of course. A receives the forty, or fifty, pounds (say, the miserable hundred) and keeps ten, or twenty, for profit, having expended the remainder on material, and assistant labour. This is the one direct form of bodily gain, for the labourer in the

limestone quarry, or, as it may be in church building, in the brickfield or in the stone-yard at the site of the church itself. And the skilled workman stands to gain always, no matter what be undertaken, from a crocketted spire to hot water pipes. Provided the money is spent in Ireland there is no loss whatever; and as, perhaps, one half of the money has been collected abroad, the country has been enriched to some extent beyond what would have resulted from the mere circulation of home money. Church building, on the whole, has brought money into the country. So far as Irish workmen have been employed this money has remained here.

But this money, after all, has been little enough. My point is that the churches are the cheapest of the cheap. It is a rough impeachment, this squandering of money on costly churches which do not exist; but strangely enough the apologists for the churches turn this into an impeachment as soft to the soul as butter to a hot mouth. We love our church, ah! how dearly, and therefore we make sacrifices and spend of our substance freely and generously. So we are proud of what you accuse us of; nobly, righteously proud. It is a very soft impeachment and we self-consciously blush on being detected in our church building virtue!

What is the truth about the "magnificence" and the "enormous expenditure" of these "costly churches"? The truth is that there is not a really

fine modern church in the country—and hardly a few tolerable ones. I rely more on a just critic who shall be studying Ireland a hundred years hence, than any of to-day, to bear my words out on this point, but I know well that any fair-minded art critic of to-day will agree with me that by a fine church is to be meant one much more than merely strongly built. He will agree with me that by a fine church, we ought to mean an edifice that carries upon it, and contains within it, more of fine art than it is possible for the modern mechanical tradesman to supply at such and such a “reduction for cash.” An edifice in fine and in fact that as a whole, or at least in great part, shall awaken in people of taste emotions of joy and content, and not those of disgust or indifference. For that, after all, is the final test of any work of art; its power to work for joy through the emotions. Not merely its power to evoke pleasure, which is a fleeting thing, and may be an ill thing; but to awaken joy from the creative depths of our being, and which becomes a recuperating memory even should the object that generated it cease to exist. Were most of the works, say, of Mino da Fiesole or Benedetto da Majano to disappear from the earth to-morrow those who have delighted in them have known what joy means, and how it remains in the soul.

Where are we to find, in Ireland, these “magnificent,” these “fine and beautiful” churches upon which so much money (it is said)

has been lavished ? Where in the diocese of Dublin—the richest diocese in Ireland, I believe—a diocese without even a Cathedral ? How many tolerable—barely tolerable—cathedrals are there in the twenty-eight dioceses of Ireland ? I know some of the reasons why they do not exist ; but my point is, again, that they do not exist ; that fine, costly churches do not exist at all in Ireland ; that Ireland is still a country of cheap makeshift churches. The best of the few tolerable Cathedrals are cheap. I can't conceive that a noble Cathedral for Dublin—one in which the poor could enjoy that perpetual eye-feast of beauty, that would silently educate them more usefully for the true battles of life than the best of modern schools—could be built and completed for less than half a million pounds. And yet I hold that a beautiful little church could be well built for ten thousand, only *one-seventh* the price that the British Government paid, a few years ago, for a picture, originally a small altarpiece for a family chapel. But such a church would not hold many people—that is the difference.\*

So far removed from the magnificent, or the beautiful, are these cheap showy churches, that I wonder that those casting about for malicious attack have not accused the clergy of malappropria-

\* In 1890, Lord Iveagh gave ten thousand pounds towards a total sum of fifty-five thousand pounds, the price of three portrait pictures acquired by the London National Gallery. And very fine portraits they are. The altar-piece, referred to above, is the *Ansidei Raphael* in the National Gallery, London—cost £70,000.

tion of funds, or something equally nauseous, just clear of libel. A parish priest will never give even six hundred pounds for a life-sized figure of a saint when he can get "as large" a one for about sixty in a shop—or, perhaps, a plaster replica of the latter for sixteen, or less.\* If the poor man can raise six hundred pounds for his "noble Gothic" church he will rather spend it on twenty "stained glass" windows, five new altars with canopies selected to "match" those on the windows, a set of Stations from Germany (at a price he would have to pay a self-respecting artist for one), and still have a balance in hand toward the completion of the belfry or the presbytery.

Cheapness—tradesmen's competitive cheapness—is the dominant note everywhere. Priests really seem to be the most economically *minded* people in the world. They are always trying to save the cost of original design. But, in art, money saved in this way means a false economy. A small statue for six hundred pounds—cheap enough in all conscience if by a good artist—or an altar for six thousand, that would relieve the whole parish ever afterward of the burden of providing another statue, or altar, when the American closes his fist on his dollars (as he will some day)—such would represent more thoughtful economy than

\* A cheap plaster replica, however, of the work of a master, is always better value than a marble figure from a tradesman's shop—usually a replica of something that never was masterful, nor even tolerable.

those results of shopping expeditions in search of "cheap lines" in statuary.

But cheap, or not, the church in a parish is the one place the poor hold in a perpetual lease for their use and benefit. The poor man in his "hovel" may not have contributed a penny piece toward the "magnificent" church, or he may, but one thing is certain, and that is that the poor do inherit the churches of Catholic Christendom. They do not simply visit the churches once a week; they *use* them. For them the churches are daily temples of utility. The poor rightly have them, for they want them, and they enjoy them. But our modern Irish Catholic churches are not good enough for the poor—they are too cheap—the clergy have attempted too much with their scanty means. Fine churches are wanted now by all, indeed—but especially by the poor who can't travel and see fine—yet we shall never have fine churches so long as cheapness is a cardinal consideration in their building.

[8th October, 1904.]

## ON ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS.

WHEN the antiquarian or the ecclesiologist sets about writing on art, he is usually equipped in everything but the one fundamental, which is a knowledge of art. That he may catalogue tombstones, or monumental brasses, or gold and silver work, under the form of a learned treatise; or that he may describe the contents of every treasury and sacristy in Europe most exhaustively—that he may do such things as these (and that they are useful things to do I admit) is not to be taken as evidence of a knowledge of art. But the cataloguer, the accumulator, the caddis worm kind of writer deceives himself, for seldom is he one who has any real concern about art, as art.

We have had many writers on ecclesiastical ornament, and we shall have them in the future, no doubt. It is too much to expect them to know anything about art, when they know too much about that which art has produced for them to catalogue or inventorise. Pugin, himself, to whom I am indebted in this article, was an artist, but when he sets about writing on art the spirit of antiquarianism often overcomes even him. It is a dreadful fate to fall into the power of that antiquarian spirit. It only leads to museums and glass cases at first, and men who love labels, feel safe in their folly. But the antiquarian spirit

is not so easily propitiated; he needs sacrifice, and this sacrifice is the annihilation of the spirit of art at the antiquarian cromlech.

I have been moved to write on the matter of ecclesiastical vestments more than once, and I do so now because I have just had brought to my notice an interesting book from Frieberg—mostly plates of old embroidery designs, collected by the Rev. Joseph Braun, S.J.—and because here in Ireland certain schools (or groups of embroidery workers) are being established for the making of vestments, and it is yet not too late to say something about such work in general, as it almost was in architecture and sculpture. For, embroidery being a perishable and wearable production, it is wanted constantly in the churches to replace itself [About this collection of twenty-eight plates, and book of letter-press accompanying the plates, I may have something to say further on, for I wish, after specifying my indebtedness to its immediate stimulation, to approach the subject in another way than by that of a mock review.]

The Italian Renaissance, as it is termed, with its national grouping of youth and artistic vigour of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, (*more It.*) had in the seventeenth hardened into formalism. In the arts of ecclesiastical architecture and painting, for instance, it seemed that about the middle of that century that the only thing then unventured in ecclesiastical design was the universal multiplication of stereotyped ways of looking at the



same facts. Religion could stimulate artists apparently no further on original lines so long as they worked for the Church alone. Outside the Church, religion withdrew its stimulus altogether, and a materialised Paganism became the main-spring of the artist's recording life. His energies became merged in a competition of classical reproductions of buildings for public utility, in painting portraits for the palace and the council-chamber, in landscape separated in idea from human life, and, ultimately, in the illustrating of literary ideas, even though those ideas were ostensibly about religious action.

In England, in the nineteenth century, there was another revival, rebirth, or whatever it may be termed, to explain a definite religious impulse expressing itself through art. It had grown weary of the false Graeco-Roman incubus, so it re-embodied mediævalism in things ecclesiastical. In religious art it attached itself to the "tractarian" movement generally; and some of it has still kept on that side of the hedge which separates the hard road of truth from the orchard of tempting multitudinous fruits.\* Some of it has crept out to make that road far less wearisome for brave souls; yet the consolation lies in the knowing that the

\* Indeed, so far (in these islands) the most *refined* Ecclesiastical art is still to be found in the Church of England. I have been in modern English churches (not quondam great Catholic Cathedrals) where the good taste shewn in everything, from chancel decoration to "Antependium" and communion plate, would put the Brompton Oratory to shame, and Armagh Cathedral out of court on a question of fine art.

hard road leads, not to a wayside orchard, but ultimately to the Fountain of True Life and of art itself.

To-day, there is a revival of both religious and domestic arts in England ; so much so, that the architect and the decorator are beginning to look through other eyes than those of the thirteenth, or of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Honest Puginism, and even Queen Anneism, was merely a cutting of teeth (so to say) in this rejuvenescence. In painting, the European Continent generally has gained a freedom of vision, an irresponsibility of attitude toward cast iron traditions that may be as generally noted as in other parts. In a sense the artist has once more become the clever child. He wants to start on a fresh career of evolution ; but if he wants to start *ab initio*, he still desires that no knowledge contributed by past masters shall be unheeded. But what he does assert by attitude of mind, is that no period, with its so-called style, shall dictate or rule.

It is in the designing of vestments and altar plate for Catholic ecclesiastical purposes, that we find no general indication of this spirit of artistic freedom. We find no signs (or but few and remote) of this admirable and rebellious precocity of the heir to the ages. What became stereotyped in the seventeenth century is stereotyped still. For it could be demonstrated that an occasional application of ornamental "Gothic" features to an English chasuble ; or a considerable share of curlicues and inextricable dogs with snakish bodies,

or an initial or two from an ancient and beautiful manuscript, to the orphreys of an Irish dalmatic, is not of this order of artistic activity at all. It may be preferable to stagnation, or to apathy (in its own way), just as the excellent Pugin's grander imitative ideas were in their own, and unfortunately, too important way. But anybody could now Puginise a vestment without being an artist, or caring a straw about the vestment, or art, or even the Church. Anyone of the female sex, with deft and delicately strong fingers, can embroider a cope in the "mediæval style," or on similar lines of endeavour.

What then is necessary that the art of embroidering vestments for Catholic churches (leaving aside all other altar accessories in this essay) should become an art rejuvenated; strong with youth, wise, and with knowledge also? I am told that the shapes, that is to say, the cut (in tailor's language) as well as the ornamentation of the vestments, is stimulated by that stereotyped and late period referred to. If I seek for examples of this period, chiefly abroad (or in books of reproductions), I soon discover that, indeed, it was a bad period for ecclesiastical vestment making. Why, then, imitate it? Is there nothing other than Puginism and this? Ah! in Ireland there is "Celticism." There is the *Book of Kells*; with that as our Bible of art, who shall fail to do true Irish work? So then, in Ireland, with the abstraction of a few curlicues from this; and from like

sources; we can start vestment making for the clergy, really and demonstrably Irish! So *that* is necessary, then; another and native form of Puginism.

No, what is necessary is the designer himself (or herself, though there are but few female *designers* in any art), and that he know how to decorate a vestment with something that he has been moved about in colours, or in lines, or in shapes and masses. Freedom of thought in design is the solution, and the only solution. Perish the Books of Kells and Durrow rather than they should stereotypedly spread themselves into every parish church in the land; for then their merits will become as distasteful as those of the most delicious honey (that ever Irish bee gathered) for breakfast, dinner, and tea, every day of the year. Perish Puginism, perish so-called Celticism, if it here means Book of Kellsism, but live the art of design and a man's own masculine original thought as long as the universe holds together and Ireland along with it. There, then, is the necessary and the palpable—for is it not palpable when you think it out? Is it not to be postulated, and grasped as a fundamental?

In Ireland we are, in many ways, under the seventeenth and eighteenth century influence, Italian art influence when Italian church art was worse than English church art; and mostly that was as bad as any on earth then. There is no real resistance, no real rebellion against this

modern Italian debased naturalism of treatment. There is only that protest referred to ; that weak protest of an occasional feminine mind attracted by a charming and labouriously illuminated manuscript of a certain historic and national period of art. There is that, it is true. And it is a protest that may grow stronger and become almost a danger to the art of vestment making. For with the multiplication of protests of this nature in every embroidery centre (which will be inevitable if the literary study of Irish becomes fashionable) a ready-made opinion will arise among the clergy and patrons generally that what is worthy of encouragement, and a good *design*, is what is simply an application of certain features of ornament that (they know not) were better left on its native vellum in lonesome rarity. If it be "Irish," that will be enough for a lover of Ireland. The designer may not exist ; the translator of the pattern of the eighth century into the twentieth century may rank as an artist—it is "Irish" Manipulation, that is enough. The *tradesman* will begin to trade on the sentiment, he will advertise :—"Real Irish vestments, in the 'Celtic' style of ornament, by real Irish workers." But what will Ireland say later on ? This may be an unsound forecast of what may come differently. At present these vestmented protests are few, and the modern Italian (based on the eighteenth century) and other foreign naturalistic and creeping-jenny patterns for cheap dalmatics, stoles, and chas-

ubles are with us. And thereby we all suffer under this superdominance of Italian millinery, and begin to make friends with native antimacassars.

Pugin (God rest his honest soul) protested against the modern shapes of certain vestments. He wrote, and worked, for England chiefly. Through Architecture his influence was enormous in the emancipated church in both Islands; but in all parts of ecclesiastical ornamentation he saw Gothically, and in no other way. But anyway, he loved those times of history when the garment hung in graceful folds from the arms and shoulders of the officiating clergy. His love for the folds of drapery was the love of the genuine artist—of every indifferent artist even who can see but little or no beauty in the sandwich board stiffness of modern ecclesiastical attire at the altar. But, in the vesture of the clergy, Pugin's influence, in the Catholic church, stopped where he lived and died. Yet in this—at least in this return in shape to the more primitive and ample garments of mediæval times—it was an influence worth importing. For in ancient Irish costume, both clerical and lay, volume played an important and artistic part always.

Now, I do not know whether the present shape and dimensions of chasubles, dalmatics, and tunicles are regulated by any ecclesiastical laws, canons, rubrics, or rules; but I do know that in the present day one may see in Catholic churches

in places outside of Ireland less cast-iron rigidity of shape, some variety of amplitude and outline. And I am not concerned about the origin, or the later accredited symbolism of the vestments used in the ceremonies of the Church. It is nothing to my purpose that every ecclesiologist of importance now considers the vestments to be the "natural result of evolution from civil Roman costume," or that it was general once to attach a symbolic meaning—say, to an *orarium*, when the stole (or the *orarium*) is a scarf with some, or the hem of a vanished and primitive vestment, and with others the signification of the easy bonds of Christ. I shall not quote Durandus, nor Georgius, nor Rabanus Maurus, and if I refer to Pugin, or to Macalister, it will be with reference to the value, shape, colour, materials, or design of the vestment.

I do not care whether a dalmatic derived its name from Dalmatia or not, if it be not a beautiful dalmatic; nor whether the orphrey of a cope be properly five inches or ten inches wide, unless the pattern embroidered upon it be suitable in colour, and in design of line, to the robe as a fit vestment for the beautiful service of the altar. And I wish to stand (as it is my place), on the outside of the altar rail, for my eyes can see therefrom what it likes and what it dislikes, however the mind be stirred by the accumulating symbology of a vestment. No religion turns on sacerdotal millinery; but art at the altar certainly does, and

in great part. And art is well serving when it is serving religion always. This is the offering of a treasure, and so the subjection of it to the worthiest of objects—a paying of tribute to the supreme beauty to which the senses lead, and there leave us subdued and prisoners to joy and perfection.

This is an overlapping age, and, probably, it will be succeeded by an age of sterility. While it is with us we must make the best of it. So I presume it is for that reason that books are now compiled and printed on every conceivable subject; dictionaries, encyclopædias, compendiums, treasuries, and so forth. And we have now books by the hundred for the artist and designer, and I have seen a notice of a book that has been written to save the painter the trouble of searching for a title for his as yet unpainted picture! And the author of it appears to be an art critic. Now, just imagine anybody attempting to save anybody else the trouble of searching among his books for something that will impose a picture not yet painted upon an omnivorously reading and artistically ignorant public! But then it is a public to whom a poetical quotation is like the imprimatur of the poet himself to the excellence of the painting. And the poet being some famous man, who perhaps thought in his time certain men were great painters when they were often but mannikins of muckery, what is his suggestive and quotative imprimatur worth? So we have also books about needlework and embroidery and



vestments and such like ; a few of them useful, and most of them misleading as to what is admirable, and what is like to stimulate the growth of the admirable.\* And then that more limited public, that troubles itself about vestments, if it were told that the hood of a certain cope were an imitation of something already found embroidered on a fifteenth century vestment in some cathedral sacristy abroad, would see something vastly fine in the design that had not been discoverable until the information were received. For a premeditated association of ideas on the part of the embroidery worker (as in a poem-quoting painter) does set up a spurious, yet sufficient, power over the judgment of many. And that which the eyes do, indeed, behold they are unable to appraise on its merits (or defects) as design for a purpose, independently of associative chicanery.

If men read that the *Opus Anglicum*—the English embroidery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—was considered on the Continent superior to much that was produced there ; or if they read

\* Here, for instance, is a quotation from a book that is both useful and misleading, in places : “ Before beginning a piece of work for a church, especially an ancient church, it is always desirable to be informed of its style of architecture, its date, and to know to whom it is dedicated. These particulars are of great importance in choosing designs for the embroidery. For instance, if the church is of the fourteenth century and dedicated to St. Andrew, powderings such as the lily (No. 1), taken from a fourteenth century encaustic tile, may be alternated with St. Andrew’s crosses,” etc., etc. No wonder that ladies misunderstand the meaning of *design* as applied to art. But this book (Maud Hall’s *English Church Needlework*) has considerable utility in its illustrations.

that Matthew of Paris has something about "the Lord Pope" sending to all the Cistercian Abbeys in England for their wonderful "embroideries in gold, which he preferred to all others;" they are moved to admire a preserved example, if they are shown one existing (maugre the Lord Harry). Yet an ill design is an ill design all the world over from Rome to Derry, and whether it be seven hundred years old or seven days, indigenous, imported, original, or imitative. Antiquity does not (or should not) give any work of art, as art, any kind of credential to praise, or such things (among thousands other) as the recently acquired gold boat in the Dublin Museum—which is the ugliest and most contemptible object ever manufactured—would be a fine thing, and worth something beyond its weight as metal. Antiquarian eulogy helps to form bad taste, and it ever will. There are vestments which are beautiful indeed: and there are vestments which are time-preserved atrocities. Fine art has no age.

So, in art, or in essays calculated to criticise art, or in books that claim to teach the technical side of art as far as they can, let the historical "authority" remain *in petto* as it were. It is of more importance that the ability of the designer declare itself than the archæological spirit of accuracy. Provided always that one break no laws, nor make incursions into a territory not one's own. Though, if [he reasonably commend, say, the shape of a thirteenth century mitre, or the

ample folds of a mediæval chasuble, it may be an useful thing to levy corroboration of fact upon the archæologist that the spirit of accuracy may be pacified. So, and only so, and for no other reason whatsoever should the artist, as an artist, appeal to archæology.

Let us now consider a few vestments in detail, mitres, chasubles, copes, etc.

A mitre is a comparatively small vestment, yet, perhaps, the most imposing one of all, excepting the tiara of his Holiness itself. It has no extensive surface to be decorated as dalmatic, chasuble, or cope. It is almost as confined in that way as a maniple, or a corporal. Yet, the bulging, seventeenth-century shaped, present day mitre would be better reduced in size. Macalister, in his book on ecclesiastical vestments, gives an illustration of the Limerick mitre—a *mitra pretiosa*. This shape had already developed from an earlier one, but here (and in similar examples) the art of decorating mitres has reached its finest point. Not its furthest point, for mitres went on growing larger and more elaborate still, but when the proportions of a mitre got beyond this “three to one” proportion, as it may be termed\* and the whole vestment grew taller, bulgy, and weaker in outline, no matter how rich and rare was the

\* A very fine proportion is got by taking a square the height and breadth of the mitre, pressed flat; such that the lateral mitre angles reach the sides, one-third the sides of the square from the bottom; and the angles at the bottom of the mitre are one-third of a third part from the bottom angles of the square.

ornament, it declined in artistic grandeur on the head of a bishop. The shape of these earlier mitres cannot be generally improved, though they could be varied somewhat. The dignity of a mitre depends chiefly on a severe and coronal shape. With the tall curved mitre not unlike the old foot guard's headgear of the eighteenth century in frontal appearance, dignity was lost, and in the attempt to *gain* it. In the Dublin Museum there is a modern *Mitra Pretiosa* of white satin, embroidered and jewelled. The ornament of this mitre is based on ornament of the seventh century, and was worked (and, I suppose, designed) at the Convent of Poor Clares in Kenmare. The interlacing "Celtic" bands and middle strip, or pillar, is in various tones of green, with bright red in places. There are a few jewels that sparkle in their right places, and the satin on the front of the mitre is quite covered; at the back it is visible as the ground of the pattern. The infulae (or lappets) are also decorated. Comparatively it is an interesting mitre, a protest on the lines of the old manuscript ornament, which may not be an annexation exclusively Irish, and I refer to this mitre because anybody in Dublin can see it, and the shape approaches somewhat to that of the older mitres before the sixteenth century began to spoil them. Some *mitræ pretiosæ* in that fourteenth century of expansion and delight were crocketed at the edges, and finished off at the point with jewelled crosses. I daresay (but I

don't know) there is no modern ecclesiastical rubric against this special ornamentation of the edges. If there is not, it is a wonder that the crockets have not re-appeared in Ireland, being, as it is now, the most crocket-loving country on earth. I have not heard of, or seen any modern example of such a mitre.

In the Musée de Cluny there is a fourteenth century (or fifteenth century) mitre with the "Deposition in the tomb" worked upon the face of it. It is an example of late work, and the angle of the cleft is about half way up the mitre, and this spoils the proportion, but otherwise it is a good example of figure work applied to a mitre. There is an illustration of it in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* for February, 1904, to be found at the National Library. Now were the band below (with the saints under canopy in it) cut off, the mitre would be of a better shape; but the disposition of the ornament would be disastrous. It is a good example of the intermediate stage between the "Limerick" and the present Archbishop of Dublin's, or for that matter, the present Archbishop of Westminster's barrel-shaped ones. At the Tudor Exhibition in the year 1890, there was exhibited a portrait of an English Archbishop, by Holbein, in which both a fifteenth century crozier and mitre are represented with the fidelity of that famous painter. The picture is in the Louvre, Paris. Anybody interested, living in Dublin, can readily judge of the shape and

adornment of this mitre also, for there is an excellent reproduction of Holbien's picture on the main staircase of the Art Museum in the city. It may be noted that the point is terminated by a cross, and that the edges are crocketed slightly. The borders are heavily pearled—there is no "pillar" up the middle—and there is a cluster of gems like a rosette in the middle. It is a high and slightly bulging mitre, and is a good example of the beginning of the end of the advance in vestmental Catholic art.

How much is spent on a mitre nowadays in Ireland where such "gigantic sums of money are squandered on the churches and priests," as I have heard a man say who didn't believe it though he said it, and wanted *others* to believe it? Henry VIII.'s favourites knew the value of a *mitra-pretiosa* in their days; it was not "two-pounds-ten-and-six, and ten per cent. for cash, you being a friend of the bishop, you know." When they destroyed a mitre for the robbery of its gold and jewels, they destroyed sometimes a bequest, or a gift, of a *thousand pounds* or more!

Chasubles have undergone more changes for the worse than mitres. They have not grown larger, but have inversely shrunk with the swelling of the episcopal headgear. As to the merits of the piece cut away in front, to permit the arms to be brought together, they may be allowed as utilitarian merits, but the merits of beautiful folds hanging from the shoulder and across the arm

are, to the artist, of greater significance. Had the chasuble not grown stiffer and stiffer there had not been any reason to cut it away in front. For let it be also allowed by the strict sacerdotalist that if art is to speak its mind it must speak it unreservedly. Provided no rubric, law, or decree is infringed, it should be permitted to say that if a certain custom of shape is followed, a fine result cannot be gained. Art, within its province, must dictate, and not be dictated to. If an ecclesiastical patron is satisfied with the wares of a dealer in stereotyped fashions, it is for the artist to show him, if he gets the chance, that the patron is taking his shop art as he takes a receipt in fashion, or custom, for a sum of money expended for a certain purpose which did not include the decoration of the receipt by an artist.

But is it because the chasuble that hung down over the arms is of mediæval shape that the artist admires it? It is not. It is true that many mediæval vestments and ecclesiastical accessories illustrate good and noble art, because in periods of progression, when men and women have hope and emulation as motives, and joy and consciousness of power as recompense, art mostly thrives. And it is true also that there always comes a time when progress in art arrests itself—or is arrested by inartistic conditions imposed upon the artist—but a time comes when art revenges itself upon itself, or invites the revenge of its enemies, which, in effect, comes to a like thing.

And the art of mediæval vestment-making and adorning shared the common fate of all the arts ; and yet it is not the mediævalism in a vestment that stirs the admiration of the artist, though much of mediævalism was unavoidably admirable. It is the evidence of sincerity to the unwritten (and never to be written) laws of beauty that he sees often in mediæval work that affects his judgment. What written law on this earth is as powerful as the unwritten, and obeyed chiefly because it is unwritten, and, so, exacting ? It was unavoidable that in the days before a cheap vestment became a commodity of ordinary shop-trade, when everything ecclesiastical—gold, silver, or silver gilt images, private legacies, bequests and presents to the Church, copes, croziers, chalices, and chasubles, were of the best that man could produce (or women sometimes reproduce), it was unavoidable that the goodness of the givers, that charity, generosity, expiation, renunciation, or restitution, should not manifest itself in the beautiful. But in the sordid chop-chop of the counter there is nothing that *can* manifest itself but the trade itself ; there is not even the joy that somehow expressed itself through those vicarious channels of the heavenly ones, when the ninety-nine just tradesmen left art alone and the one craftsman did penance for his sins by working for a tyrant he detested.

But the English chasubles before the “Reformation” were not always admirable, judging



by the few examples that I have seen and by illustrations of others. What the Irish were like, in value, as in decoration and embroidery skill, I don't know. A quotation like the following will explain why we have so few examples of either old English or Irish vestments, chasubles included, remaining. Though, to be sure, all vestments being of a naturally perishable nature, it is probable that very few examples except those worn almost threadbare (as those copes with fine Flemish orphreys in the Dublin Museum, lent by the Bishop of Waterford) would have remained as they do now indeed remain in other museums and certain private collections. The quotation (as follows) may suggest the explanation :—

“In this month of April, and in May, commissioners were directed through England for all the church goods remaining in cathedral and parish churches—that is to say, jewels of gold and silver, silver crosses, candlesticks, censers chalices and such like, with their ready money, to be delivered to the master of the king's jewels in the Tower of London ; *all coapes and vestments of cloth of gold, cloth of tissue, and silver*, to the master of the king's wardrobe in London ; *the other coapes, vestments*, and ornaments, to be sold, and the money to be delivered to Sir Edward Peckham, Knight ; reserving church one chalice or cup, with table cloathes for the communion board, at the discretion of the commissioners, which were, for London, the lord mayor, the

bishop, the lord chief justice, and other." (From *Stow's Chronicles*, p. 609, quoted by Pugin in his *Contrasts*.)

This was in the reign of that most Christian and pious King, Edward VI., who was defending the faith, like his beloved father before him ; in a variety of ways, all more or less profitable to defenders and protesters.

The folds of the Greek himation, and afterward, the Roman toga, made the beauty of the garment. In ordinary male attire beauty has now passed away. There is as much contrast between a tight-fitting cassock or a soutane and the still customary habit of the older Orders as there is between the modern chasuble and the early ones. Pugin says something about the form of these chasubles, and what artist will not follow him and, at heart, will not many a priest ? He says :—

“The present form of chasubles are not only hideous, but they destroy the meaning of many of the ceremonies of the Mass. The very rubrics of the missal and pontifical are worded with reference to a large and a *pliant* chasuble. . . . The stiffness of modern vestments is almost as great a defect as their form ; indeed, the impliant nature of their material has, in a great measure, led to the reduced front. They cannot be too pliable, either for convenience or dignity. Every artist is aware that the folds of drapery constitute its great beauty ; the most majestic mantle extended

flat is unsightly.\* Ever since the chasubles have been made of a stiff material, they have been avoided by the sculptors and painters in their works, and they invariably select the cope instead, solely on account of its folds, when, if the chasubles were made of the ancient graceful form, they would afford the most beautiful combinations of folds. With those, however, on whom all considerations of art and antiquity are unavailing, those of convenience may have some weight; now a pliant vestment will last three times as long as a stiff one; it accommodates itself to all the positions of the body; it will fold up and carry without injury, neither will it tear and fret the antependiums when it comes in contact with them. Plain velvet or silk, with a thin lining, are the best materials for ordinary use. A vestment made of these, in the old form, with embroidered or lace orphreys, will not be more expensive but wear far longer, and be easier for the celebrant than those stiff shell-looking chasubles made on the Continent, which stand out like boards, and crack when they are bent. . . . But not only are the rubrics suited to large chasubles, but they presuppose them to be made of *pliant materials*. During Lent, according to the Roman rite, the deacons and sub-deacons wear chasubles *rolled up* and thrown over the shoulder.”

\* If the reader has been into the treasury of Notre Dame at Paris and seen the gorgeous coronation robes and vestments there—lying extended in their big drawers—he will understand this point.

Pugin goes on to say that even at the present time the "ample<sup>d</sup> chasuble of St. Thomas of Canterbury, preserved at Sens, is annually worn, during Mass, on his festival." (Pugin wrote the above in 1844.)

Drapery—a vestment, a chasuble—without folds is a sacrifice of one of the chief charms of drapery without any but an utilitarian gain, if there be any real utilitarian gain, in the stiff sandwich boards of a vestment, that is. One can almost imagine it must be a daily penance to say Mass in it, despite that cut-away part in front of the chasuble.

Copes have retained the shape of the original vestment. Being what is termed a processional vestment, its wearer does not, except in the act of benediction, or in giving the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, need freedom for the use of his arms. For though there have been, and may still be, such occasions as on a *Festa quatuor capparum*, with coped cantors, or a great festival Mass where the "senior clergy assist in chasubles and the rest in copes," the cope remains a vestment which is not in use when any marked degree of action is necessary on the part of its wearer, beyond walking, that is, it remains a "processional vestment," and its decoration should be designed with this fact not forgotten.

Confining myself to examples in this country for illustrations, I may point out that both decorative and undecorative copes can be seen in the Dublin Museum. Those (already referred to)

called the Waterford vestments—of early 16th century Flemish origin, it is said—with wide orphreys, were rich with colour once. Now they are worn out and faded, and it is not without some imagination that one can re-habilitate, let us say, the “Agony in the Garden,” or the “Carrying of the Cross,” or the “Crucifixion,” on one of the hoods. But they are still vestments of beauty, though the fine pattern on the body of the material itself has not been woven exclusively for the vestments, nor needleworked as it might be with a beautiful gaining. Yet if we look for an example of the worst kind of a needle-worked ground we have only to go to another case on the ground floor, and there we can see how such decoration can suffer in a bad period. There is there an eighteenth century cope of white silk, with that kind of rose-bud decoration taught once to young ladies at convent boarding schools. Early wall-paper rose-buds with long stringy connections spreading weakly in all directions without constraint. (For remember that in all art constraint makes strength.) It is, in effect, a feminine garment, not a sacerdotal one at all, and an ugly one to boot.

A fine example of a rich, red velvet and satin appliqué orphrey is in a wall case upstairs in Room X. The ornament on this orphrey (as much of it as remains) is well spaced, but the upper portion, unfortunately, has been cut away. In this room there are numerous examples both of excellent and of poor design.

Copes were usually fastened with gold or silver gilt morse, sometimes heavily jewelled; and though in one sense these come under the classification of ecclesiastical metal work, yet a cope is hardly a complete vestment without a morse. A Highland plaid has its jewelled brooch even, and the early Irish cloak had its fibulæ or fastening of gold and enamel. A band of embroidery, or the makeshift of a curtain hook, is hardly suitable for the richest and most ample of all the vestments. Pugin quotes Dugdale from one or two inventories as to the value of these morse in England, and here is the brief description of one in Lincoln Cathedral :—" Item, a morse silver and gilt with gemmels, with branches of vines, with a large stone like a man's eye in the one leaf, and Eve eating of the Tree in the other leaf, having sixty-three stones of divers colours, weighing sixteen ounces and a quarter, wanting a stone." Here is another, also silver gilt :—" Like a quaterfoil, with an Image of the Majesty in the midst; an Image of Our Lady in the top, Paul of the right hand, and Peter of the left hand; Paul wanting the sword, with four Evangelists, and a man kneeling in the foot, weighing ten ounces." Very good for a fastening, though one cannot tell what the modelling was like, but if the " Lord Walter Gray, once Archbishop of York," presented to his cathedral a gold morse weighing *seven* pounds and two ounces, " with a large ruby in the middle of great value, with other precious

stones," it is probable he took care to have it well wrought by a capable artist.\* Some of those English Cathedrals had twenty and thirty gold and silver, figured and jewelled, morses alone; private benefactions and bequests. People talk sometimes about the rights of private property—it is a matter of history that the great majority of these gold and silver ornaments went into other private pockets perforce—and the poor who did *not* starve when these ornaments were in use, now began to starve when they disappeared. But they, who had heretofore given bread and a blessing, were replaced by those who gave a law and a lie, and lived on the proceeds of both.

Yet, a morse for a cope need not of necessity be a costly ornament to be a beautiful one. Gold (or silver when gilt) is a costly substance, but another metal can be used as a foundation if needed—it is the modelling of the figures and ornaments upon the brooch, or clasp, that makes it beautiful. Gems, of course, have always a beauty of their own, and perhaps they are well placed when on a morse. It is just the right part of the vested figure to adorn with jewels—here and on the forehead round the base of the mitre. The obsolete *rational*, as it was termed, like the Jewish Ephod, was never such a beautiful ornament as the useful morse, whatever may have been the rational's symbolical value.

\* Was this a rational? Morses and rationals were inventorised together.

Dalmatics have kept to their original form somewhat nearer than chasubles. They could, however, be improved by lengthening, and, as in the case of every other vestment, by more thoughtful decoration. For this latter is usually of a decadence as evident as that on a chasuble. If the borders, or the orphreys of a dalmatic, or other vestment, be designed by an artist with decorative talent, it matters little whether he bases his ornament on any flower, or symbolic unit, or simply on some form because of its beautiful suggestions as ornament, and as ornament alone. A frank choice which does not pretend to rest on any literary or symbolic idea is often a happier one than any other. He may even have the joy (if he wish it) of putting a fresh symbolic spoke into the wheel of mystery without intending it as such. The purpose of any decorator is to decorate, rather than to indicate or suggest mysteries. If his patron will have a symbol portrayed, and it suits his own artistic purpose, very well, but let it suit his own artistic purpose admirably, and *justly*, otherwise it won't be admirable.

And so with all vestments, albs with their coloured apparels, stoles, humeral veils, maniples and what not. Freedom of design, as I said, is the solution, and the only solution. There can be no freedom of design if the artist has no freedom of mind. How is it that one can tell at a glance to-day an old Flemish vestment, or an English, from a Spanish or a Florentine? Let ecclesiastical



patrons answer the question. But could I tell—could they tell—at a glance the difference between a modern chasuble of, say, the Archbishop of Dublin, from one of the Archbishop of Glasgow, of Milan, or of Turin, or of Sydney, Australia, if they were placed in a row for inspection? The Church allows freedom of design in all the ecclesiastical arts—why then should an imposition of foreign ideals in these things be submitted to? Because it is loved?

About repeating patterns on borders and orphreys, and on stoles, let it be generally noted that there are two extremes in the designing of any pattern which has to be repeated. Indeed, in any pattern, whether it be constrained within continuous lines, or have a wider field of exhibition, as in the manner of a wall paper, or if it be the sgraffito decoration of the exterior of a house, there are two extremes that flat ornament reaches, or verges toward. One, an extreme of geometricality—where the underlying and necessary skeleton protrudes itself, as it were, through its foliated, or figured, or floreated clothing,—or where the geometric motive is loved entirely for its own sake; and the other extreme is that of naturalism, where the true geometric basis is utterly lost, and where one may find (if it be done well) a certain delight in naturalistic luxuriance, or exuberance; but restraint being lost, one may never find that content that comes of a certain opposite and restful balance of motive and construction. Now,

a geometric pattern *may* be ornament, but a transcript from nature is not, nor will it ever satisfy as such. To be sure the human figure can be introduced into a geometric scheme of decoration for anything, and the human figure must remain human. Even a centaur or a satyr must be true to nature in those parts that are human to be satisfactory ; and the grotesque to please as art, by some unwritten law, will for ever remain with animal or floral forms. But a sheer floral naturalism such as one sees in much of the embroidery in Ireland is less ornamental than the natural human figure introduced into a restrained and conventional motive. The figure will play its necessary part—one of contrast ; but the very repetition (geometric in itself) of the natural flowers that one sees on many embroideries only seems to emphasize the ineffective transcripts from nature—however faithful such transcripts may be. Naturalism in ornament, in a sense, becomes “ lifeless ” and dull because it is naturalistic, and not artistic—translation of fact, not creation of pattern.

Lewis F. Day, in one of his text books of ornamental design—very useful books to both teacher and student, I remember—says :—“ In proportion to the naturalistic character of a design, and the point of realism to which it is carried, it becomes unsuited to multiplication. To put it the other way about, the oftener it is proposed to repeat a form, the more imperative it is that it should be removed from the imitation of nature, and the

further it should be removed. It needs, in short, adaptation to the purpose of repetition. Such adaptation is strictly in proportion to what I have called its reticence. A highly elaborate and attractive feature—anything, certainly, that is in the least self-assertive—will not bear so much reduplication; whereas an insignificant device may be multiplied *ad infinitum*.” [*The Application of Ornament*, p. 8.]\*

A few words on Father Joseph Braun’s interesting folio of needle-work designs, about which I should like to write more than its importance seems to demand, will conclude this essay. It being an age of books on every conceivable branch of art-work, every fresh literary venture in the subject seems but as adynamic in itself as a speck of foam on the breakers of the seashore,

For some years Germany has been following (at a distance) in the wake of France and England in this matter of instructional art literature.

But a book on Catholic vestment designing—literally a book of German designs, intended to save Catholic workers the *trouble* of designing—if it be instructive at all, can only be so to those who have no ability to think for themselves, or to those who have not been trained under an artist, or teacher of decorative design. It may give them

\*Any interested reader finding himself in Florence should not fail to go to the Opera del Duomo and look at a wonderful 16th Century gold embroidered Chasuble of Venetian workmanship; with beautiful figures duplicated by the “turn over” process. The figures are worthy of Del Sarto, the Florentine painter.

a lift in the direction of art, perhaps, but the writer of the letterpress, Father Joseph Braun, S.J., himself, claims more than this. He says :—"The patterns are not intended for beginners, but for embroiderers with some skill," and he futhermore says that he will add to this work "a manual with all the useful hints about everything a worker in church embroidery should know." A technical manual, such as is here suggested, might be much more useful to embroiderers than the book of designs under notice. Stitches, and textile peculiarities and limitations, can be partly taught in such manuals. In the introduction to the present book Father Braun, S.J., says :—"Remarks have been added about the proper colours to be taken . . . . the number of designs can easily be multiplied either by combining different patterns or by enlarging and reducing them, or by adapting them to other church vestments by forming, for instance, a chasuble cross by means of one of the borders," etc., and this suggests to me that, whatever may be his care and love of the mediæval in church art, he has not the conception of the artist at all. And these words further on in the introduction seem to prove it :—"For every pattern can be effected with more or less simplicity. There is a great difference between a simple outline embroidery and one artistically finished in gold or full colours." It is in the use of that one word *artistic* that one interested (however genuinely) in art betrays himself. An outlined—a plain vest-

ment without even an outline at all—may be more artistic than one heavily embroidered in gold or anything else.

Unfortunately, the gist of all such books of ready-made patterns is this:—That if you add certain units of ornament to certain other units you will have, with little or no trouble, a ready-made “design” to hand. Then we have a kind of hotch-potch of “very splendid effect,” as in a canopy hanging; or, as an alternative for “nice borders for altar cloths,” a chasuble cross straightened out, and so forth.

Yet, with all this *omnium gatherum* of the mediæval Gothic in the plates, Father Braun’s venture is as sincere a one as many another from Germany. Perhaps if we had some of the less rustic of these patterns worked in beautiful colours on beautiful material we should not be so badly served in Ireland as we undoubtedly are at present. But many are perilously naturalistic, and they would have shocked the mediæval Pugin of fifty years ago. The writer’s own personal objection to such books of patterns is that they make for the sterilization of resource and stereotype ornament. In a school of art, or in the workshop of a master, a designer is taught (or should be taught) all the principles of beauty that underlie any worthy example of decoration; and, therefore useful reproductions (or, if possible, original examples of the best work in any specified art) should be closely studied by the student to discover the

presence of those principles for himself. But Father Joseph Braun, S.J., has produced a portfolio of designs, "in mediæval style," intended to save thought, time, and trouble. His patterns are to go straight from his plates to the altar; and if they do but halt half way, and thus modifying themselves through the mind of the intelligent embroiderer, receiving some little addition of individuality before they proceed further, they will be more successful in improving vestment ornamentation than I dare hope they will.

But one is glad to note an author commending the ornamentation of albs with apparels, as Pugin suggested, and revived, fifty years ago. Lace all-round an alb is an effeminate and a comparatively modern custom—the alb with apparels, the material of the alb itself reaching right down, is a dignified and beautiful vestment, which the modern lace curtain never can become. Lace, somehow, seems by its nature fit enough for the raiment of a woman, or, even, as it was at one period, attached to the shirt of a man; but fine white lace around the feet and attached to a masculine outer robe or vestment does seem misplaced. How, or why, I don't know; the reason is too elusive, but its misapplication seems pronounced enough. But Ireland is a fine lace-producing country, and we may presume lace will hang itself around an alb so long as ladies love lace and the clergy abstain from looking gift-horses in the mouth. Father Braun seems to approve of "net lace

tracery" for surplices, etc. If, in this world of marvels, it were ever my unsought destiny to gain the ear of the Holy Father himself at Rome, one of the things I would ask him would be to censure lace in the sanctuary altogether.

As a final word, let me add that a design for anything is not a design in any sense unless it be a design for a definite purpose carried in the mind of the designer; and that a designer of vestments must think in colour as well as in line if anything is to come of it in vestment making. If the colours on copes, altar frontals, or antependiums (where are *they* seen in Ireland?) chasubles, or what not, be not beautiful in choice and arrangement the finest designs in line, and the finest needlework adherence to them are altogether wasted

## A MOUNTAIN CHURCH.

LET it be remembered always that ecclesiastical painting and sculpture are immediately and constantly enjoyed by the people. The rag-picker can enter the Cathedral daily to say, perhaps, her mid-day Angelus, and there resting on the rush-bottomed chair, or kneeling before a shrine, draw into the soul struggling behind its bars, of conventional abasement, a breath from the divine and infinite beauty. The fashionable physician, holding his silk hat, crown uppermost, careful of the nap, leaving church by the side aisle after Mass, passes by a series of paintings once a week. His taste in art may probably be lower than the rag-picker's, but the pictures hung there are for all. For all; and they should be for all time. Let the mind just concentrate itself for a few moments on church art, and ask itself what it should be. Then answer as best it may.

The wonderful Italian and Flemish altar pieces, that to-day hang in foreign national collections hundreds of years after their creating, were first enjoyed by a contemporary peasantry at one with the spiritual out-look of the painter and sculptor. Donatello, and Benedetto da Majano, and Van Eyck, and Francia, were for these peasants, and chiefly for them, let who will assert the contrary.

With thoughts such as these for company, I



must have been walking a long time ; but the period of my travelling did not occur to me. I had passed dark bogland pools and yellow furzed hills, and had descended a deep bohreen bordered by blossoming hawthorn. When I arrived at the valley it must have been an afternoon in May. There was a small lake there, and a majestic spire of circular and Irish development (very unlike the angular spireens of Puginism), with its stories accentuated with bands of simply carven sculpture, was reflected on the peat-red waters. The church, attached thereto by a curious gallery pierced with quaint columnar openings, stood, with its accordant presbytery, about a mile apart from the hillside town, and on a slight eminence. I had no need to visit the town, for surely I had come to see the church ? It had been reported that the mural paintings, among other matters of moment in this mountain fane, were wonderful examples of ecclesiastical fitness ; and the report included stories of the fervour of its congregation ; and of the religious intelligence of the simple country folk, of rarer discrimination than that of those who lived in the great city thirty miles away.

I entered by the western porch, after passing through a flagged and low-walled outer parvis, where I knew (also by report), miracle plays and moralities were often played on sunshine holidays. Above me, in a niche, was a stately bronze statue of the Blessed Virgin typifying the *Janua Coeli*, and beneath my feet a spacious mosaic pavement

of beautiful marbles ; green serpentine of Connemara, Galway black and Cork red, and Rostrevor dolerite, and Westmeath moneen. On either side of the porch were seats of dark grey limestone with carven inscriptions ; and, as I presently discovered, these seats were repeated at every bay of the interior nave and at the base of each supporting pier. But the interior benches were seated with a sheathing of oak, and some were shaped less severely in design. They were intended for the weak and aged ; the vast body of the church had no seats, and the eye on entering took in the marble-flagged floor as the beautiful foundation from which the chastity of the whole design seemed to spring upward. Pews arranged in serried ranks, like seats in the pit of a theatre, were not here.

I took holy water from a large bronze stoup with a pedestal of symbolic design, and also with an inscription around its marge. "Asperges me"—I was compelled to read at a glance—"In nomine Patris"—I was compelled to think and to say aloud. There was also, just midway between the great pillars of the inner porch, again with its inscription, but of Mosaic, and in the Gaelic character, a spot for bending the knee. For here where the outer daylight was subdued, the high altar became distinctly visible, with its silver tabernacle and jewelled shrine containing some relics of St. Oliver Plunkett, lately canonized. It was the re-established custom here, that all worshippers

genuflected at the entrance. And this spot, perhaps, was marked for the city worshipper, who waits until he has found a comfortable pew in his parish church before he visibly acknowledges the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

After performing this act of reverence I looked around. Here was an ecclesiastical building ; the Church herself in architecture ; or one aspect of the Church translated into an edifice. There were plenty of plain spaces upon which nothing at all was carven, and on which the eye could rest with peace. Much carving and inherent colour of material, along which the eye could travel with joy. The timbered roof, above the shafts of soft light from the square clerestory windows, gradually appeared, and its dark foliated panning made happy contrasts with the white limestone of an upper arcade. The colossal supporting piers, square in section, also of coursed limestone, upheld this oaken roof, and the clerestory gallery ran along from pier to pier breaking their soaring monotony without dividing their purpose. There were no windows below in the aisles, I noted, as I turned towards the outer walls. The white clerestory lights were sufficient illumination, and the large stained glass windows high up in the eastern apse, and those over the transept doors and above the western gallery, lit the church with a soft flood of mingled colour which yet was not thrown directly toward the walls of the aisles.

Yes ; upon these mural paintings, these stations,

seven of a side, between the seven wide bays of the nave, the light fell gently with a neutral effect. It was of a quality that did not affect these frescoes ; (or rather water-glass permanencies which could be cleansed without fear when dingy from taper smoke or the dust of time.) I had come to criticise, I think ; to animadvert upon if so I felt inclined—but I presently felt more eager to perform the devotional exercise they illustrated than to criticise them as works of art. For here was the triumph of drawing, colour and design, happily united ; that these things were so combined as to make one forget that they were the beginning and the end of the painter's work. The action of the figures was not exaggerative ; neither were they too quiet in pose. They were not doing anything, yet they were not lifelessly attitudinising ; they were decoratively illustrative of the meditation enjoined for each group. The colour of all of them was brilliant, yet harmonious and broad by the arrangement of a master ; and they stirred something within one like the whole church—like the voice within one, when another's thought has struck upon a buried bygone thought of one's own.

The figures were life-size, though from the spaciousness of the church, one did not realise it at first. In fact, one thought not of size nor of number ; though there were just enough figures in each of these frescoes to explain the different phases of the *Via Dolorosa*. In the Crucifixion there were

but four ; in the Judgment Hall of Pilate, but three ; in the Scourging, but two ; the worshippers *themselves* made the multitude looking on, and perhaps felt sometimes like a few among that multitude of olden days.\*

After examining these Stations I entered the side chapels, and then, after some prayers in the seclusion of one—there was no putting them off—I took a seat on one of the oak-sheathed benches near the crossing of the transept and looked at the shrine above and behind the altar. I could not take my eyes off it, once I gazed, for at least some half an hour's space. And then, presently when I arose to depart I felt some regret that I had not knelt all the time. Excepting the painted altar piece, the jewelled silver shrine, and doors of the tabernacle, the stained glass windows and the panels of the lower marble walls, and the pavement, the sanctuary was all fair Irish limestone. It was one chaste harmony, full of subordinate contrasts, expressive of imperfect man's love for his Creator, and the praise of His infinite and perfect return of that love. I could understand why that peasant woman who was kneeling at the sanctuary rail since I entered, remained almost immovable, even until I departed. I, who had not come to pray, but to criticise, could hardly draw myself away. The whole scheme was the outcome of love which had sought the best that the educated hand could express ; and tangibly,

\* See article on " Stations of the Cross."

the value of love's devotion reared its best of human art. And withal, there was the reticence of the spirit that would keep certain exuberances unspoken. For there was planned restraint everywhere, rococo violence nowhere. Simple character, strong because decidedly simple; ornate detail, solidified thought, where the ornate could emphasise the reticence even as, perhaps, a florid phrase of music will make a beated pause itself a passage of beauty.

Presently sitting on one of the stone benches at the western door, and looking out across the lake toward the further hills, a procession of priests, acolytes, and thurifers, followed by some two hundred or more of country people, entered the church; and the ecclesiastical portion proceeded to the chapel of our Lady in the northern transept, the altar of which, ere I had left my place near the sanctuary, had become blended aureolas of flame. And then an unseen choir in the chapel broke forth into melody. It was a Wednesday evening in May, I re-told myself. That was why all these people carry bunches of white flowers; that was why the bronze figure of our Lady, over the great porch, had a spray of fresh hawthorn reclining along the drapery of her arm—and my hands were empty! How could one have forgotten this token of purity! I, a sinner, perhaps greater than any here, the only negligent one in that church (for I had followed the procession into the edifice again)! And then gently swelled that music of children's

voices from that unseen choir—music reminiscent (yet not so entirely)—suggestive of Ireland's devotion ; of love, hope, and perhaps patriotism too ; of the wayside and the pattern ; of the Irish soul ; of buoyancy on a substratum of conquered despondency. And it was also suggestive, in the way that the transposed music of Adam de la Hale's *motets* were of the "profane" songs of fourteenth-century France.

And after the Irish Litany of our Lady, and the Latin *Tantum Ergo*, and a hymn to Mary, also in the vernacular, I found myself outside among the departing congregation, listening to and attempting to understand their soft, sweet, and sometimes sibilant speech. And thus attempting, the scene suddenly dimmed and changed, and I awoke in Marlborough Street Cathedral—for I had fallen into a moment's slumber—in a side pew there this May afternoon. Ashamedly I lifted up my eyes towards the heavy architrave above the painted columns. They fell, a little higher still, upon a decorator's representation of a red-cushioned piano stool, and I wondered what it might indicate, I closed my eyes again for a second and tried to recall that chant of the mountain children ; that Irish Litany which still ran like a melodious under-current through my mind. Nay ; it had fled indeed, indeed. So I opened my upraised eyes again. "Sedes Sapientiæ"—seat of wisdom ! I turned to a tower like an advertiser's trade mark—"Turris Davidica" ! The crude house-painter's symbology

here in the Primate's cathedral! This encompassing sordidness of colour everywhere! I sought the Station nearest to me. It was something black with a number. Then to another of them! Ah! that one should feel sick and depressed, in perfect bodily health, here in Mary's month of joy, and Easter but lately passed! Then, that church where adoration and praise and love arose from one's soul like an unchecked spring through the rocky earth, meeting no barriers, finding its free and open way—*it* was but the dream of a moment! Alas, it was; and more's the pity of it.

. [6th December, 1902.]



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